

# Innovative HOME

## ADAPTABLE DESIGN

Creating a LIFE HOME for the Ages

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The modern family is a diverse, organic, evolving unit. From cradle to grave, the family dynamic is in a constant state of change as it adapts to various life stages. The dwellings we occupy, on the other hand, are generally static. Rarely are homes designed to adapt to residents' changing needs and lifestyles. A growing trend within the architectural, design and building community, however, is seeking to create new flexible life homes designed to house a family throughout its many changing seasons.

This concept of design adaptability conceives of life-giving, design-appropriate homes that allow residents to age in place. "Design adaptability speaks to many different changes in people's lives," said Stewart Davis, AIA, design director and principal architect at Texas-based CG&S Design Build. "Homes need to be designed with flexibility in mind. Human lives are constantly changing, so we should design our homes to be as change-friendly as possible."

Christine Barbour, a housing research consultant with Newport Ventures Inc. who is also working on the Partnership for Advancing Technology in Housing (PATH) Concept Home, seconds Davis' sentiments. "Homes need to be more adaptable or flexible so they are easier to update and renovate as homeowners' needs change over time," she said. "People live differently in their homes than they did a decade ago. ... The issue is that there are so many decisions to make when purchasing a home, that it is hard to imagine what your needs may be tomorrow."

The PATH Concept Home, an initiative between the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and America's homebuilders, exists to design and build a technological vision for the nation's

homes. Based on demographic and market research, the Concept Home will feature interior service zones that allow for complete flexibility of use and adaptation over time. Of the six Concept Home Principles, four directly address design adaptability. These four principles include flexible floor plans, organized and accessible systems, improved production processes and standardization of measurements and component interfaces. The home also features moveable furniture walls to quickly adapt to changing needs and aging-in-place provisions. The Concept Home—located in Omaha, Neb.—is slated for completion in spring 2007.

### Tangible Application

Though the PATH Concept Home is currently a conceptual project, there are a host of innovative architects and builders who are opting to employ a variety of flexible solutions to create change-friendly dwellings. Take for example the work of Los Angeles-area-based Studio Pali Fekete architects (SPF: a). The firm's office is located in a mixed-use development that occupies a full city block. Known as the MODAA building, the Museum of Design Art and Architecture, the development is the brainchild of SPF:a's founders. In

### RESOURCES

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**CG&S Design Build**  
[www.cgsdb.com](http://www.cgsdb.com)

**MODAA**  
[www.modaagallery.com](http://www.modaagallery.com)

**Partnership for Advancing  
Technology in Housing**  
[www.pathnet.org](http://www.pathnet.org)

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**Steven Ehrlich Architects**  
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**Studio Pali Fekete Architects**  
[www.spfa.com](http://www.spfa.com)

**Vitra Design Museum**  
[www.design-museum.de](http://www.design-museum.de)



Image by Greg Hurley

Designed by Texas-based CG&S Design Build, this home houses one of the firm's owners. The structure was remodeled to better suit the family who desires to age in place. The residence features a variety of transitional elements that can be adapted to better accommodate the homeowners' changing needs.



Image by Thomas McConnell



Image by Thomas McConnell



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