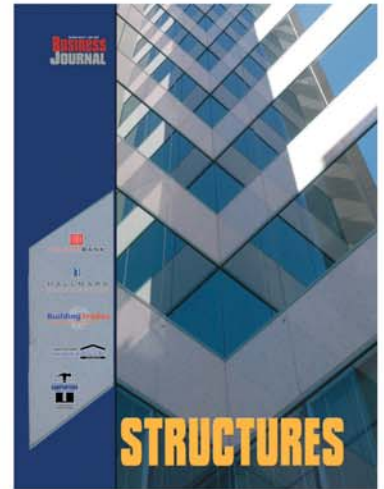


SILICON VALLEY / SAN JOSE

BUSINESS JOURNAL

OCTOBER 28, 2005

96 N. Third St.
Suite 100
San Jose, CA 95112



STRUCTURES

RUNNER UP - ARCHITECT / DESIGN FIRM

MIRO sets sights on innovative design

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MIRO Design, a San Jose architectural company, is looking to the past to ensure future success with its projects.

The future for MIRO means constantly trying to develop innovative designs to further break down the stigma and negative stereotypes that have developed around affordable housing.

Founded in 2002, the firm has used its deep understanding of the development business to forge a close working relationship with developer ROEM in the area of affordable housing projects in the region.

"We started because ROEM sees the advantage of having a design firm that can dedicate and focus a lot of its expertise, energy and creativity on ROEM's projects," said Anthony Ho, president of MIRO Design, adding there is a fundamental shared commitment that more can be done without sacrificing the dignity of residents.

"To a lot of people, their impression of affordable housing is cheap-looking and low-quality construction. We believe we can change that. We can provide high-quality, luxury-looking projects that are affordable in price," Mr. Ho said.

Absent from MIRO's work are unique

features that other design firms have used to distinguish their projects. "Our projects need to blend seamlessly into their environments. It has to work for its people. We want our projects to be timeless, not timely. The major influence on our design comes from the history of the place, of the people," he said. That approach that has become a hallmark of the firm's endeavors and has garnered it praise from community leaders, neighbors, and government staff.

"We believe that ultimately, architecture should not be merely an artistic expression or a signature for the architect. Architecture, to be successful, has to be an expression from the entire community," Mr. Ho said.

"That is our goal, and the achievement of such goal in every single project we do is what is setting us apart from others in the industry," he added.

Going forward, Mr. Ho sees the new challenge facing the firm is applying its same philosophy to blend bigger developments, such as a 1,000-unit community in San Jose now in production, into their environments.

Along with affordable housing, MIRO does design commercial projects — like recent a one at the corner of Story and McLaughlin in San Jose — custom



homes, non-profit endeavors such as the Childrens Discovery Museum renovation in downtown San Jose, and market-rate townhouses, condos and apartments, including a recent project in Japantown in San Jose.

David Scholz is a freelance writer based in the East Bay.