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SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS

ROWLAND+BROUGHTON: BUILDING A FUTURE

by JEANNE MCGOVERN

WHEN SOME PEOPLE USE BUZZWORDS like “sustainable,” “re-use,” “passion” and “vision,” the meaning rings hollow. They are just words; a spin on the way the speaker wants to be heard.

Sarah Broughton is *NOT* this person.

When the principal of Rowland+Broughton Architecture and Urban Design says she and husband John Rowland have always sought to build a business that is sustainable, she means it. When she claims the firm prides itself on a green philosophy based in large part on “re-use,” she has the data to back it up. And when she shares her “vision” for Aspen — and the dozens of commercial and residential projects the architecture firm has had a hand in since its inception some 11 years ago — “passion” becomes not only a word she speaks, but an emotion she exudes.

“We’re built to last,” says the 40-year-old Broughton, who met Rowland in a design class during their first year of school at CU Boulder. “We’re solid.”

Whether she’s referring to her marriage, her business or the town she calls home — or all three, perhaps? — is unclear. One thing that is clear, however, is that her passion for architecture and design are matched only by her passion for “community.”

“I think we’ve built a reputation built on mutual trust,” says Broughton, who spent eight years on the city of

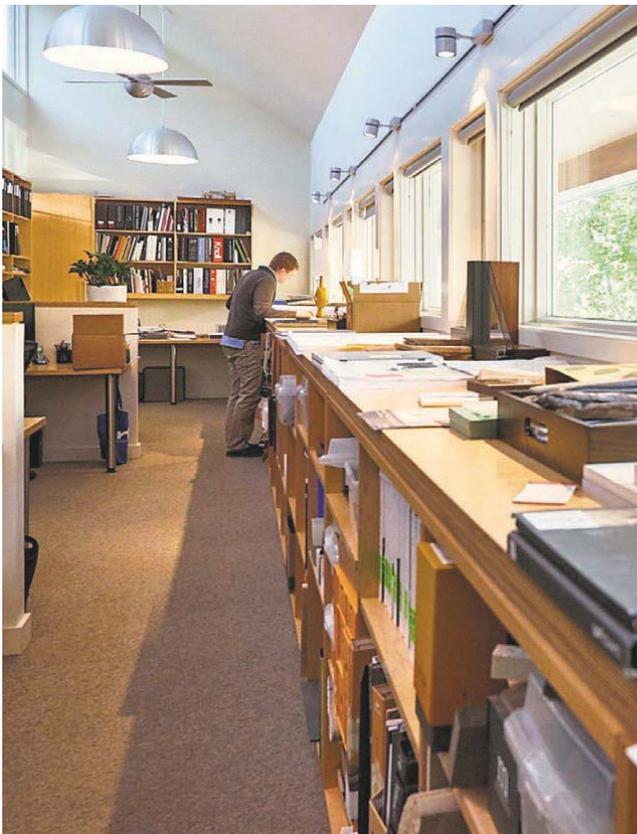
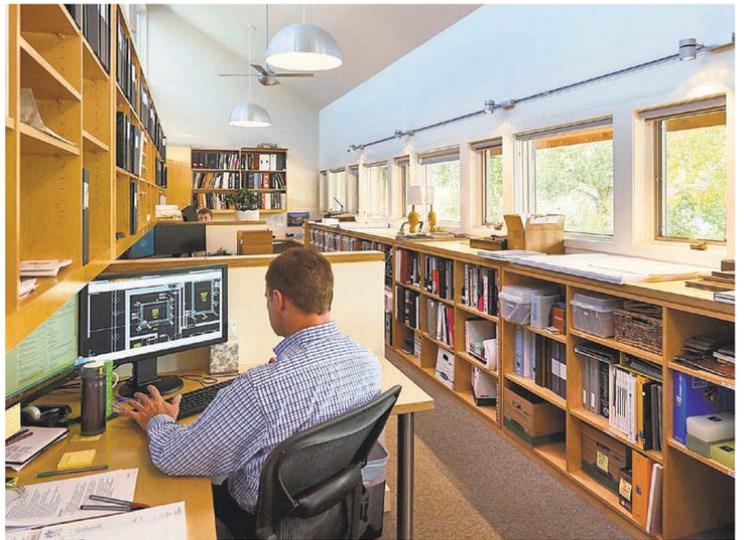




**“WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO ASPEN, TO ITS LEGACY. BUT CHANGE WILL HAPPEN. THE QUESTION IS: HOW DO YOU BALANCE CHANGE WITH LEGACY? IT IS A FINE LINE, AND WE WORK HARD TO RESPECT THAT.”
— SARAH BROUGHTON, PRINCIPAL**

ABOVE: Sarah Broughton and John Rowland have built their business based on the belief that the design process is a collaborative process.

BELOW: The R+B Aspen offices, on East Hyman Avenue, are a hub of activity for the company's growing team of architects and designers.



THE WORK & THE REWARD

High-profile projects completed by the R+B team include White House Tavern, Hotel Jerome and the Crandall Building (all pictured below), to name a few. On the horizon: the Sky Hotel renovation and the expansion of the Hotel Jerome into the building where The Aspen Times was housed for more than 100 years.

With the team's hard work has come some significant recognition. Among the recent accolades:

- 2014 IIDA MERIT Award, Rocky Mountain Chapter Black Birch Modern, residential "Live" category
- 2014 IIDA BEST Award, Rocky Mountain Chapter Woody Creek Distillery, commercial "Play" category
- 2014 INTERIOR DESIGN Rising Giants Ranked No. 52 in the top 100 Interior Design Rising Giants firms for 2014.

- 2014 Historic Preservation Commission Award White House Tavern, HPC Award for Renovation



Aspen's Historic Preservation Commission.

Rowland, who served four years on the city's Planning and Zoning Commission, agrees: "We know our shortcomings; we're not afraid to admit to them.

"But we also have the resources and relationships to create success for our clients."

Among those resources is a staff of 30 between two offices, in Aspen and Denver ("it helps us keep our finger on the pulse," says Broughton of the latter location). It's a huge leap from where the couple started: after graduating college and following stints in New York City and on the Front Range, they moved to Aspen. Knowing they wanted to work for themselves, they got to work — as a staff of two grinding away out of their condo

"We had to build some street cred," explains Broughton. "We had to slowly establish ourselves, one project at a time. We still do that; we still treat each project like it's our last."

Of course the idea that R+B might be on its last project is far from reality. Graduating from their home office to a downstairs space in downtown Aspen to its current top-floor corner offices with a mountain view, this Gen X couple has created waves in Aspen. Their "stamp" can be seen almost everywhere you turn, though they argue their work does not have a certain "look."

"We're always open; we don't go it with any preconceived notions," says Broughton of R+B's approach to new projects.

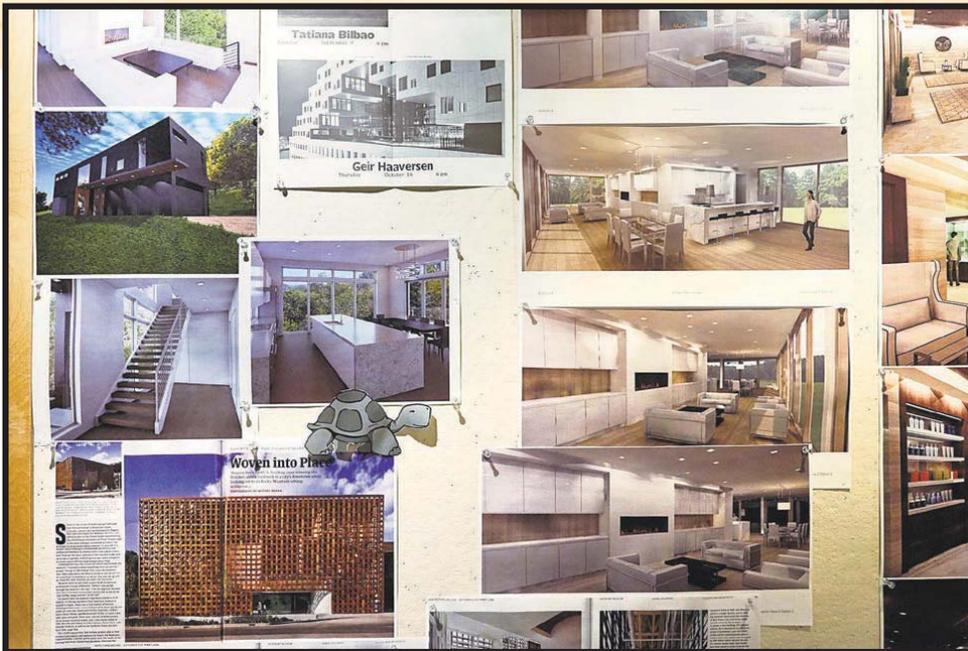
The sheer breadth of the firm's work — 359 projects, including nearly 200 renovations both residential and commercial (see sidebar, right) — speaks volumes. But in a town like Aspen, where even the slightest change can cause an uproar, Broughton and Rowland have become masters of creative collaboration. They have figured out how to back up the buzzwords with honesty and integrity.

"We are part of this community; we say all the time there's no better place in the world," says Rowland, using words like "surgeon" and "scalpel" to describe how, at times, work within the city's tight land-use-code must be approached. "We are invested in doing the right thing."

Of course for these community-oriented entrepreneurs (R+B was named 2012 Business of the Year by the Aspen Chamber Resort Association), doing the right things is as much about drafting plans and building walls as it is about building a team and drafting a future for them.

"We are committed to the culture of our office," says Broughton, noting that while the company is currently hiring, they are very selective about whom they invite to join their team. "We want people who are curious, interested, engaged."





THIS PAGE: From a wall pinned with success stories and inspirational stories, to models made of everything from Legos to cardboard to wood, the R+B offices foster creativity, which is just what principals John Rowland and Sarah Broughton had in mind when they started the business more than a decade ago.

In short, Broughton and Rowland are creating a team that's built to last — which, in turn, means the projects they deliver are similarly built to last.

"Our success needs to be sustainable," says Broughton. "Our work needs to be sustainable."

A few simple ways R+B ensures this outcome: weekly Skype meetings, where the Aspen and Denver teams dissect projects — past, present and future. They also know, and respect, their limits.

"We will turn down a job," admits Rowland. For example, if a client wants a job done "good, fast and inexpensive," R+B isn't afraid to say "that's impossible."

Of course they hope others charged with potentially changing Aspen's architectural landscape will abide by the same standards. But Broughton and Rowland are far from naive. They have opinions on the new Aspen Art Museum (mixed) and ideas about what Chicago developer Mark Hunt should (and should not) do with the myriad downtown parcels he's purchased of late.

In the end, though, they say they'll stay focused on how they — and their team — can get the job done. And, more important, why they do the job in the first place.

"We just like to make things better," concludes Broughton.