

Bild Architecture named Micro-Enterprise of the Year

BY DALE MCGARRIGLE

Versatility is the watchword of Bild Architecture, named Micro-Enterprise of the Year. The Portland-based firm is largely the husband-and-wife team of Evan Carroll and Sasha Salzberg.

Architect Carroll handles the architectural and design work, while Salzberg takes care of public relations, marketing and other business matters. They collaborate on decisions regarding the direction of the firm. The couple shares an office at 17 Chestnut St. with two local developers.

"This is our third shared office space, and we enjoy being around other entrepreneurs and business owners," Carroll said. "We have had as many as four people on our payroll at a time, and currently it's just Sasha and I. We have to adjust our size with the workload, which at our small size is based entirely on which projects we're currently working on."

The couple founded Bild in 2011. Previously, Carroll worked at another Portland architectural firm, while Salzberg had been doing marketing and business work for a couple of area design companies.

"We are both from Maine and have been very involved in the community in regards to the built environment and issues surrounding it, so our primary mode of getting business has been word of mouth," Carroll said. "We have also put a focus on design for aging, supportive housing and design for the disabled. This issues surrounding the need for this kind of work are powerful, emotional and meaningful."

As spelled out on its Web site, Bild has a well-thought-out philosophy: "The role of an architect is to look inward at how spaces shape people's lives and outward at how the built environment shapes society. Every project – and not just architecture – can

benefit the most from comprehensive, inclusive planning in the early stages. At Bild Architecture, we realize that beyond design, we must be willing to consider: analysis of need, examination of feasibility, and how a project may be financed."

Carroll said that Bild's projects land in a few categories: "There are a couple of areas that our work seems to fall into: full design services for multi-family housing, permitting services for small business owners, full design services for supportive/elder housing, and front-end feasibility and renderings services for developers. For me, this is a good blend of very local work, and very specialized work."

A special passion for Bild is life-long design: "Maine is the oldest state in the country, and we also have some of the oldest housing stock," Carroll explained. "This means that people with declining abilities to take care of themselves are disproportionately in homes that need a significant amount of maintenance. Having experienced the challenging outcomes of this in our own families, we see our understanding and focus on life-long design as a move that is both good for our community and good for business."

Bild's involvement with SBA mainly consisted of Carroll taking an SBA class a few years ago to better understand the terms his wife was using. Winning an SBA award was a pleasant surprise.

"We are honored and thrilled," Carroll concluded. "As a professional services firm, we think of ourselves more as providers than business people. It was an humbling to be at that ceremony with so many great Maine businesses."

Bild Architecture; PO Box 8235; Portland, Maine 04104; www.bildarchitecture.com; (207) 408-0168



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