NEAR & FAR AID DESIGNER Q&A SERIES
POSTED BY KIM RONEMUS ON APRIL 5, 2017

SERIES PART 1: FIVE QUESTIONS WITH ANN SELLARS LATHROP
PRINCIPAL, SELLARS LATHROP ARCHITECTS

Q1: What are some of the latest innovations you’re seeing in architecture/ new construction as it relates to sustainability?

A1: We tend to see construction details and overall design as intertwined, so for a sustainable new construction or renovation we always gravitate to high performance products and materials.

On the market, we are seeing many new “passive house” type European windows and doors, flashing tapes, weather resistive barriers, air sealing materials and insulation options. Different LED lighting and maintenance free materials seem to be appearing weekly. Many of the products are geared to the commercial market but more and more residential architects are specifying these products, especially if they hope to attain Energy Star, NET Zero or Passive House standards.
Q2: Your firm is well known for building sustainable homes that incorporate solar and other green technologies. What are some ways to improve efficiency within a home?

A2: One of the most important requirements for efficiency is air sealing. Without airtight construction, renewable energy can only take you so far. Good windows and doors help, but if one has limited resources for air sealing the exterior of a home, here are some areas to work on: seal big holes first (any penetration through a wall you can see); then seal at the basement / crawl space rim joist and openings; and then seal all holes and penetrations at the top of the house. These are the highest pressure points for creating a stack effect.

If you are painting any rooms, give your painter a box of cookies or few extra dollars to caulk the bottom and tops of all sheetrock walls prior to painting. High levels of insulation and having a high efficiency boiler, furnace or air-to-air heat pump are also critical for maintaining energy efficiency within a home.

Q3: How would you describe your design aesthetic?

A3: We don’t have a particular style, as each project is so different. However, a few common characteristics include clean lines, open and airy spaces, abundant natural light, connection to nature and maintenance free materials.

Q4: Where do you pull your inspiration from when beginning a new client project?

A4: First of all, the inspiration comes from the site and solar orientation. Second, it comes from the owners program. Third, it comes from the owner’s desired “look and feel.” Rarely, do we start a project without some major input from the owners on what the end product may look and feel like.

Q5: What’s been your most challenging / rewarding project to date?

A5: That is like asking who our favorite child is! All of them are challenging and rewarding. Otherwise we would not have taken them on. We often work with third party raters to calculate and then test for a home’s energy rating. In those cases we find the most rewarding projects are those that achieve the lowest “HERS” scores. The lowest score of zero, also called NET ZERO, is our end goal.

ABOUT ANN SELLARS LATHROP
Ann Sellars Lathrop, AIA, NCARB, is a principal at Sellars Lathrop Architects, llc. Ms Lathrop received a Bachelor of Arts in Political Economy of Industrial Societies, with an emphasis in Urban Design, from the University of California at Berkeley. After three years of work experience at large architectural firms in Los Angeles, she then returned to school and received a Master of Architecture from the University of Pennsylvania.

Her past work experiences include space planning, master planning, interior design, architectural design, management, and construction administration for a multitude of different firms and project types: Corporate interiors with Gensler and Associates in Los Angeles, commercial and institutional buildings with Philip Johnson and Moshe Safdie in New York, adaptive re-use projects with Svigals Associates in New Haven, commercial development projects with Cesar Pelli Associates in New Haven and commercial tenant fit-ups and renovation work with Torchia Associates in Chicago.

She was also a founding member of the Alliance For Architecture, a program of the Arts Council of New Haven. Ms Lathrop is interested in improving energy efficiency and implementing smart building practices to create high quality design solutions with elegance, character and style.

**ABOUT THE FIRM**

Sellars Lathrop Architects Westport, CT firm specializing in sustainable, energy smart, residential projects filled with warmth, creativity, and abundant natural light. For more information, or to connect online, please visit:

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