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# Creating the COMFORTS of HOME

Interview by Kristen Carstens



**ESTATES WEST CHATS WITH...**

**LEE HUTCHISON**

**Firm:** Urban Design Associates LTD.

**Education:** Arizona State University

**Awards:** Best in American Living: Home of the Year and Best in Region (1995), Platinum (1998), Gold (1999 to 2000); Gold Nugget Awards, Grand (1996), Merit (2000-2003)

**Web site:** [www.udaltd.com](http://www.udaltd.com)

Specializing in residential architecture is what Urban Design Associates does best. Based in Scottsdale, Arizona, the firm brings a mix of organic Pueblo, Santa Fe and adobe-style homes to the high desert communities of Paradise Valley, Desert Mountain, Flagstaff and Sedona, to name a few. In between projects, the firm's principal architect, Lee Hutchison, shared with *Estates West* his thoughts on Phoenix's architectural community and what he thinks is fueling today's demand for custom design.



**What project would you call your most courageous design to date?**

My design work is not what I would call an exercise in courage. Sometimes I feel that some of my clients step out in courage, especially if their project is a first-time venture into the world of architectural design. It can take courage to buy that hillside lot that looks unbuildable, courage to trust the architect to use that land wisely and creatively.

**How does your firm distinguish itself from others in the architectural community?**

Most publications you see, and the attitude of many architects, seem to support and feature very contemporary or extremely hard-lined, minimalist approaches to architecture. Our architecture usually incorporates a more organic, soft, flowing approach to the comfort of living spaces. Occasionally we have a client that prefers a more minimalist approach, but we rarely leave out the details that reinforce feelings of comfort, such as curved and plaster walls.

**What role do your clients play on your project teams?**

The clients are our team leaders. This premise assures the clients that each decision made in design, in cost analysis by the builder, and decisions by the interior designer are in their best interest for developing the best project possible. They need to know that every idea they have for their new home will be heard, considered and potentially incorporated into the design.

**Your sources of inspiration?**

Inspiration for great design comes from the appreciation of design that has been produced in the past and reapplying it in new and creative ways to fit the current needs and desires of the client. I have a massive library of different architectural

sources depicting details from all over the world, many on Southwestern and European architects and styles. I love to travel and study the many fine examples of architecture, including Italy, France, Canada and Mexico.

**Your thoughts on Phoenix's architectural community?**

Architecture in Phoenix is some of the finest you will see anywhere. We have an abundance of some of the best architects in the country that keeps raising the bar of excellence.

**What's fueling today's demand for custom design?**

Local and national publications are taking a new interest in bringing the best design in residential and commercial projects to the forefront of the public's attention, so the art of architecture and the appreciation of its beauty and complexity are increasing the awareness and demand for custom design.

**What do you do when you're not working?**

One of my new loves is digital photography. Thousands of architectural details are at my fingertips to be viewed and referenced at the flip of a switch. The opportunity to hold so many images that can be viewed so easily makes it very convenient to access a reference that can be conveyed to clients, my architects, designers and job managers. So when I'm not working, I'm planning my work.



*Opposite page: This Arizona bedroom relies on curved lines to create interest and comfort.*

*Above: No matter the residence, Hutchison's designs are organic inside and out.*