

## **perspective: slow and steady**

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By Nigel F. Maynard

John Brown runs an unusual architectural practice in Calgary, Alberta. A licensed real estate agent and architect, Brown helps his clients find houses to remodel, does the design and construction, and helps them acquire financing for the work. Interior design services also are available. "It's the typical architect-client relationship, but we consolidate all of the elements in the project," says Brown, an architecture professor at the University of Calgary and the principal of housebrand, which targets "the middle of the market who can't afford custom but want more than production housing." Brown's latest venture is Slow Home ([www.theslowhome.com](http://www.theslowhome.com)), a nonprofit Web effort designed to get people thinking about alternatives to mainstream production housing. He spoke recently with *residential architect*:

### **What exactly is Slow Home?**

"Slow Home helps the average person learn about residential architecture and how to start integrating the principles of good design into his or her daily life. It's about raising people's awareness."

### **Why did you start it?**

"I have given dozens of public lectures all over North America about our firm, housebrand, and its approach to bringing good, architecturally designed homes to the average person in the middle of the market. At each talk, there was an overwhelming reaction from people who want something better than what they were able to get from the production home industry."

### **What do you hope to accomplish with Slow Home?**

"We want to raise awareness about the problems with the too-fast world of suburban development and the production home industry. We also want to help people learn about good home and community design and how to go about integrating these principles into their own situations."

**What is the problem with the current housing/development construct?**

“Too much of our city fabric has been thoughtlessly designed and carelessly built. It's been created by development companies, production home builders, real estate brokerages, and big-box retailers who are more interested in making money than quality places to live.”

**What role do you see architects playing in the solution?**

“I believe architects have an incredibly significant role to play in the many solutions to these problems. One of the challenges I have found is that the average person doesn't really know that and is probably even a bit intimidated by the whole idea of wo more human face on the profession.”

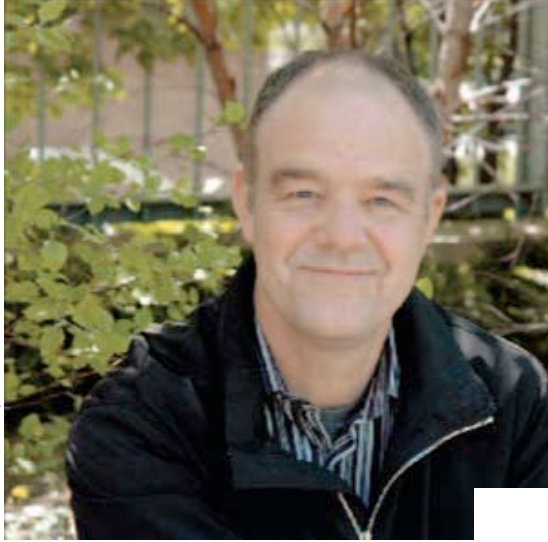


Photo: Courtesy ho



Photo: Courtesy housebrand

**Architect John Brown works with clients of modest means to tailor their houses to the way they live.**

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