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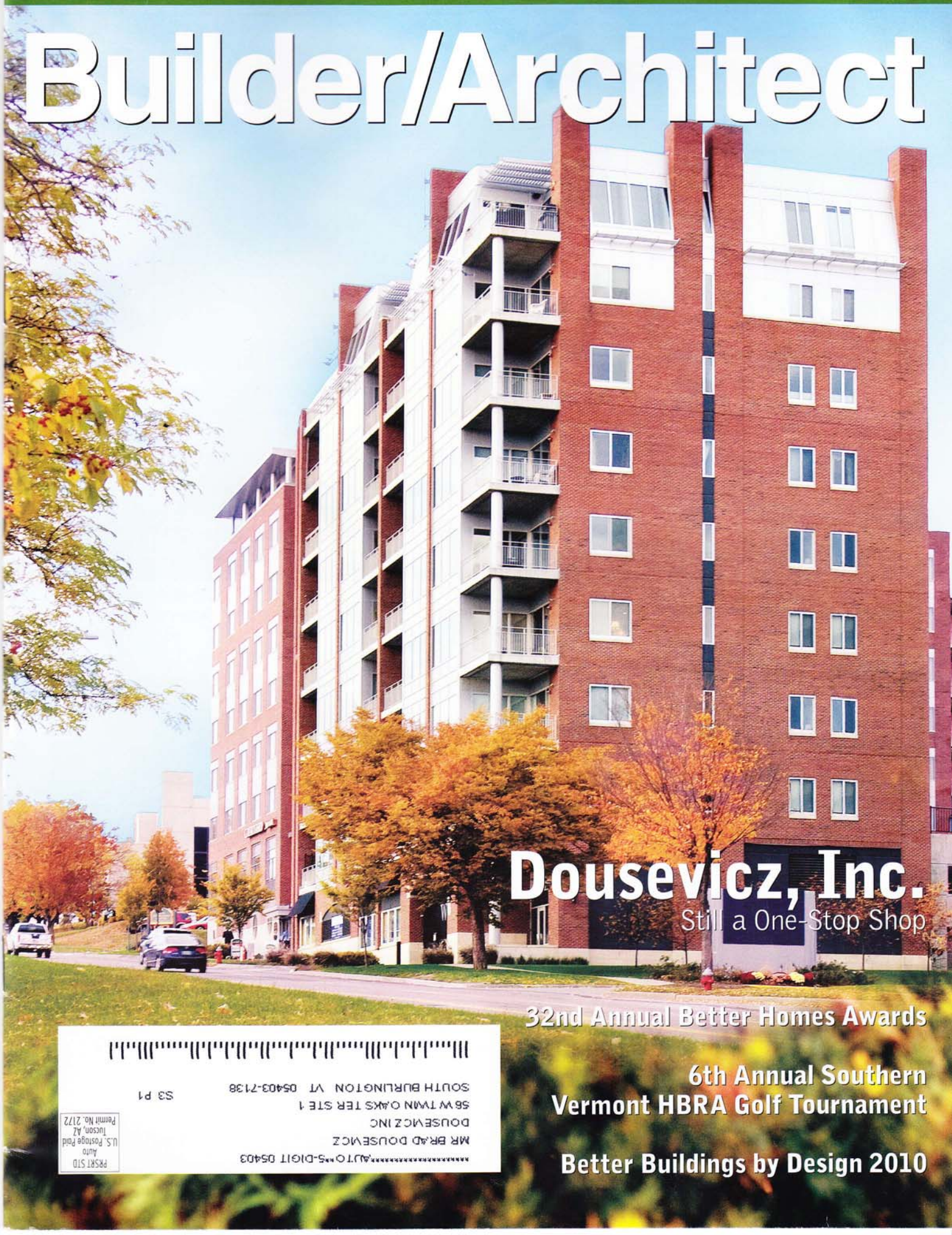

Dousevicz, Inc.
Still a One-Stop Shop

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PHOTO COURTESY OF DOUSEVICZ, INC.

A rendering (by project architect Greg Rabideau) of Village Haven, a 24-unit residential development in the heart of Essex Junction, the first (and only, to-date) project completed under the state's Vermont Neighborhoods program, which streamlines the permitting process in specific situations and has allowed Dousevicz, Inc. to offer the units at a reduced price. The project embodies efficient site planning and the latest in green building. Inset shows two of the buildings under construction.

Dousevicz, Inc.

Still a One-Stop Shop

By Dick Nelson

Brad Dousevicz stands amid an expanse of freshly graded earth, an array of construction equipment and a few partially framed buildings, gesturing excitedly. He's thinking, and talking, about what will stand there a year from now.

"This is a textbook example of Smart Growth," he says. "Governor [Jim] Douglas has visited here a couple of times already. It represents the kind of housing he wants to encourage. The village of Essex Junction has been very helpful. This is the kind of development they want, and there was basically no objection whatsoever from the surrounding neighborhood."

The project is called Village Haven, so-named because it is smack dab in the middle of Essex Junction, sandwiched between dozens of existing 50-year-old homes in the town's Indian Acres section and a stone's throw from the shopping district on Pearl Street and the Champlain Valley Fairgrounds. Yet, it is being built on a secluded tract of land that few even knew existed.

"It's a perfect location," says Brad Dousevicz. "We have all the services here. Town sewer, town water. It's walking distance to restaurants, schools. You can literally walk to school, from elementary right up through high school."

THE STATE'S FIRST 'VERMONT NEIGHBORHOOD'

Once completed, Village Haven will consist of 18 moderately priced single family homes, along with three other buildings housing six duplex units. It is the first — and so far, only — project approved under the Douglas administration's much-touted Vermont Neighborhoods program, which allows for a streamlined, less rigorous permitting process. Passed in the spring of 2008, the program encourages new housing development within or contiguous to Designated Downtowns and Villages, where existing infrastructure



Situated "At the Top of Burlington," one of three penthouses at The Westlake Residences commands a spectacular view of Lake Champlain and the Adirondacs. Suite was designed by Paul Robert Rousselle Architect; glass by from St. Albans Glass.

already exists and where local zoning and planning are in place.

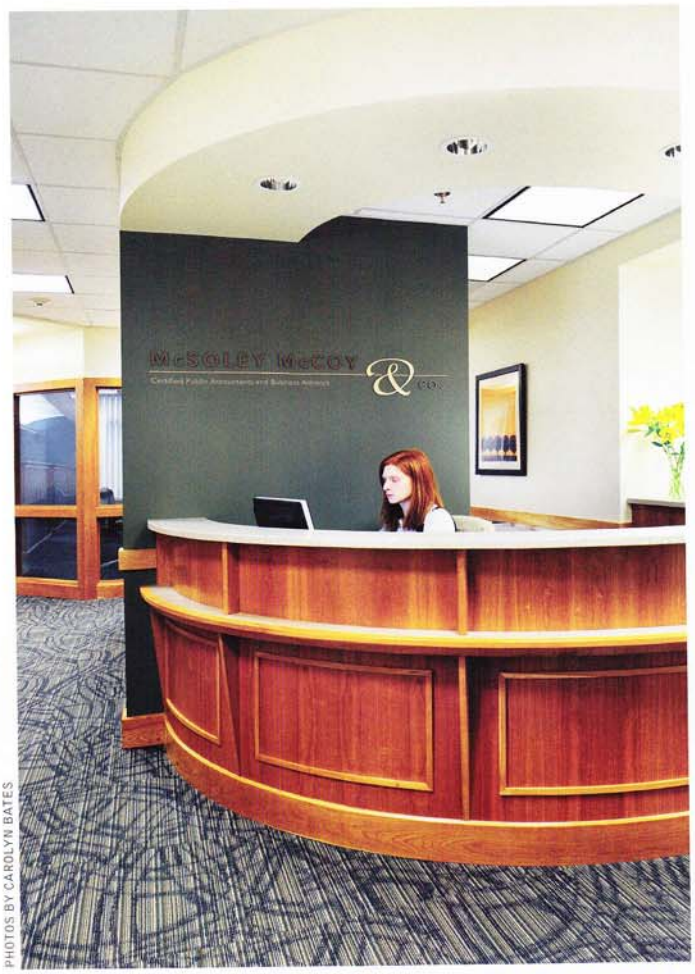
Said Gov. Douglas recently, "This site is a great example of how we can work together to encourage housing that working families can afford. We can achieve this goal, and at the same time, uphold our strong environmental standards. Projects like this are critical in this economy as they create jobs for Vermonters and stimulate our economy."

"Because of the lean permitting process, we were able to avoid going through Act 250," says Brad Dousevicz. "Going through Act 250 would have added thousands of dollars to the price of each unit. As it is, we're able to offer our homes from between $258,000 to $320,000. You can get a new single-family house

The high-end kitchen in that same penthouse has a large center island for an open feel, and the highest quality fixtures (from Blodgett Supply), tile and appliances (from Cocoplum).



PHOTOS BY CAROLYN BATES



PHOTOS BY CAROLYN BATES

Dousevicz, Inc. was selected to do this commercial office fit up for the accounting firm of McSoley McCoy in south Burlington, based on a design by Wiemann Lamphere. They took an empty shell and built the offices from the exterior walls inward, incorporating custom woodwork by the Dousevicz, Inc. crew.

here for the price of an existing condo, and right in the center of town. It's a tremendous value. We've had a lot of interest already. There were 20,000 hits on our website [www.village-havenvt.com] in the past month alone."

Since it is serving as an example of the Vermont Neighborhoods program, Dousevicz, Inc. is determined to do it right, says Brad Dousevicz, by using some of the savings to make the project as environmentally friendly as it can be.

"We're in the Green Program through the home builders association. Efficiency Vermont will be on site during construction. Each unit will have high-efficiency appliances, a really tight envelope, with blower door testing, and a good heating system. We're treating all the storm water on site, draining it into a central, grassed-in collection area. We're recycling all our construction waste."

STILL A ONE-STOP SHOP

When Jim Dousevicz first appeared on the cover of Vermont *Builder/Architect* in March 1995, with then-partner Paul Yandow as part of Yandow-Dousevicz, the subtitle read: "Your One-Stop Builders." Back then, the company prided itself on its versatility, which is still the case today.

Seated around a conference table in their current South Burlington headquarters with other key company members, Jim Dousevicz ticks off a sampling of the projects completed by Dousevicz, Inc. over the past decade or so.

"We built the Ace Hardware building on Pearl Street in Essex Junction [near the site of Village Haven], and 'The Essex,' a 20,000-square-foot spa and pool facility in Essex Town. We've developed Bay Creek, 54 units of duplexes and single family homes in Colchester, and Autumn Knoll, 56 condominiums in Essex. We developed and constructed three elderly housing projects, including Hawk's Nest in St. Albans, which we also call 'The Phoenix' because 80% of it burned just two weeks before we were going to turn it over, so we had to rebuild it. All in all, we own 180 senior housing units and plan to develop more in the upcoming years.

"We did the Bove Building on Pearl Street in Burlington, with 34 units of housing above 10,000 square feet of commercial space that includes a Dunkin' Donuts and a credit

A hallway in the same office space shows conference rooms on the left, the main cubicle space on the right.





PHOTO COURTESY OF DOUSEVICZ, INC.

Autumn Knoll, a 56-unit development completed in 2008, earned Dousevicz, Inc. a top award from Efficiency Vermont in the condominium category. Windows and doors throughout from Overhead Door

union. Recently, we completed the Westlake Residences as a contractor/developer in partnership with Retrovest. It has 30 apartments, a 120-car parking garage and three penthouses on the ninth floor overlooking Lake Champlain, so we're real familiar with working downtown.

"Right now, in addition to Village Haven, we're working on Town Meadow in Essex, a 20,000-square-foot commercial structure that will eventually house our own offices. That's right next door to an elderly housing project that we developed and permitted and was then built by the Cathedral Square Corporation."

The site will also include an additional 16,000 square foot of commercial space, along with another 114 multifamily and senior housing units. In fact, Dousevicz Inc. is in the process of finalizing a 49-unit senior housing building right now, and hopes to begin construction this spring. It will have visibility to Route 15 and great access to services and shopping. The site lends itself very well to both commercial and residential application.

As developers, Brad Dousevicz notes, "One of our strengths is that we've formulated some really good relationships with engineers and attorneys, planners and state officials, and we're very familiar with Act 250. Permitting can be a long and arduous process. A lot of people won't do it, because it's too difficult, despite some glimmers of light such as the Vermont Neighborhoods program.

"We've also developed a good relationship with a lot of the towns. They know it'll be a win-win situation. They want to maintain the quality of life in their community, and we want to help them do that. If you enter these projects with a team approach, it'll go much smoother. If you enter with an adversarial approach, it'll be much longer and more expensive to get through."

Dousevicz, Inc. is very willing to serve as either developer or builder — or both — depending on the situation.

"We'd just as soon get a piece of the pie," says Jim Dousevicz, "rather than no pie at all. We bring expertise to the table as both developers and general contractors. We can give them a full package, from permitting to selling to construction, or just part of the package."

One company that has hired Dousevicz, Inc. as general contractor is The Snyder Companies, one of Chittenden County's best-known residential builders. "They've built three buildings for us, starting in 2003," says Chris Snyder. "The first was a 40-unit residential structure with parking underground. We took that plan and tweaked it and developed two more buildings with 35 units, and we used them again for both of them. The first time it was a bid process. The second time, we went straight to them. We knew their prices. They knew our expectations, and we knew what kind of product they could provide. They have a lot of knowledge in building larger residential buildings with underground parking. They understood the nuances and details that come with that kind of construction.

"We provided the plans, specifications, oversight and dealt with customers. They dealt with the suppliers and trade contractors who were responsible for the construction process."

It didn't hurt that the two families went way back, Snyder says.

"My parents and I have known the Dousevicz's since I was five. We went to hockey games together. I played hockey with [Brad's brother] Jed."

A DIVERSIFIED STAFF

Jed Dousevicz is another key player on the Dousevicz team. As a Realtor with V-T Commercial, he can market the various com-

This elevation (by Rabideau Architects) shows Town Meadow, the future home of Dousevicz, Inc. and a second office of Essex Physical Therapy. Lease and ownership opportunities still exist for this 20,000 sq. ft. commercial building, situated among a mix of additional commercial space and up to 150 senior and family housing units. It is sited along busy Route 15, with easy access to Route 289 (The Circ), within Essex's main growth area, The Essex Town Center.





PHOTO BY CAROLYN BATES

The Dousevicz, Inc. staff, shown in a Westlake Residences penthouse suite. "We have a nice collaboration when we sit around the table," says Brad Dousevicz. L-R: Brad Dousevicz, Brenda Berardinelli, Jed Dousevicz, Scott Aiken, Carol and Jim Dousevicz.

mercial projects developed and/or built by Dousevicz, Inc. He says keeping the various pieces of the puzzle in-house makes sense.

"We're lean by design. Everyone does a little bit of everything. Bigger is not necessarily better. Because of our small staff, we have a low overhead, and our clients know they'll be able to get a quality product at a quality price."

On the residential side, Brad is also a licensed Realtor, having been schooled in that field by mom Carol. "She started Dousevicz Real Estate," he notes. "I'm constantly talking with her. She has 30 years of experience in real estate."

Also sitting around the conference room table is project manager Scott Aiken, another long-time acquaintance and vital cog in the operation.

"Scott's dad Bruce is also a superintendent," says Jim Dousevicz. "We pulled him out of retirement. The Aiken and Dousevicz families go back 35 years. We lived in the same neighborhood in Winooski. We used to ski together, socialize together." They are aided in the field by foremen Cary Gevry and Bryan Brisson.

Rounding out the team is office manager Brenda Berardinelli. "She's been here 12 years," says Jim Dousevicz. "She knows more about what's going on than we do. She's basically the backbone of the operation."

Says Brad Dousevicz, "We have a nice collaboration when we sit around the table."

LOOKING AHEAD

Everyone at Dousevicz, Inc. concurs that staying diverse, along with a low overhead, is what has allowed them to prosper during the recent downturn, just as they did — as Yandow-Dousevicz — when the company was founded in 1990, during a previous downturn.

"We can gear up for a multimillion dollar commercial project, or a 1,200-square-foot fit up," says Jim Dousevicz. "A single family home or a multi-unit residential project."

He notes that many of the projects currently on the drawing board, or in the offing, involve senior housing, a segment of the market that will only continue to grow.

As he turns 60, Jim Dousevicz is beginning to step back, noting, "Carol and I spend a little more time in Florida now, but I'm confident in the team we have, so I feel comfortable being away."

As the torch is passed to the next generation, Dousevicz, Inc. will continue to thrive, he feels, due to a few basic principles.

"Our customers are satisfied," he says. "It's too small a town to cut corners. People know each other.

"We try to make every job we do enjoyable for everybody involved. We try to avoid anyone being disillusioned with us. We try to treat our subs and clients the way we'd like to be treated. It's a comfortable open-book approach. Our customers know they're going to get a solid project for a competitive price."

Congratulations to Dousevicz, Inc. on being selected as Builder of the Month. You may reach them at 56 Twin Oaks Terrace, Unit 1, South Burlington, 05403, by phone at (802) 860-7315 or visit them on the Web at www.dousevicz.com. ■