

LIVING WELL IN THE TWIN CITIES

# spaces

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## SECOND HOMES ISSUE

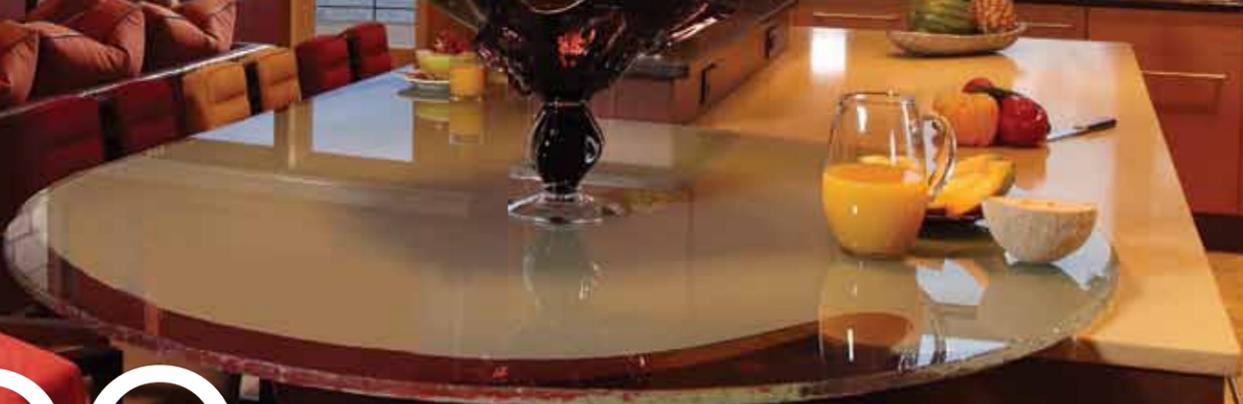
+ Mountain majesty in Colorado

+ Boathouse, bunkhouse, getaway

IN EVERY ISSUE GREAT PLACES TO EAT SHOP PLAY

RED RANGE SPARKS KITCHEN REDESIGN

HOLIDAY FINDS IN WHITE BEAR LAKE



A MINNETONKA  
 COUPLE  
 DECIDED NOT TO  
 WAIT FOR  
 RETIREMENT.  
 THEY'RE  
 ENJOYING THEIR  
 SECOND HOME  
 IN THE  
 FOOTHILLS  
 NOW.

# COLORADO CALLING



Location, location, location will always be the key to real estate, but when you're planning a second home, something else may be even more important: timing, timing, timing.

Minnesotans Rick Diehl and Delia Sonnenburg have known they wanted to build a vacation/retirement home in Colorado since a visit to Aspen 20 years ago. But they are many years away from retirement — Diehl is 52; Sonnenburg, 56 — so the tricky part was figuring out when to build.

They decided to take the plunge about four years ago in Conifer, Colo., beginning a complicated project (a road had to be built) that is now almost complete.

BY CHRIS HEWITT ★ PHOTOGRAPHS BY TODD BUCHANAN



The media room doesn't have a television set yet. Once it does, Rick Diehl predicts it will be his favorite room in the house.



reuse and they even sell the energy they don't use."

Bethke, an engineer and architect, said the home's design also shows a respect for the lot's beauty and for nature.

"The shape of the house was related to that. For instance, keeping the house low to the ground so you're moving your eye down to the ravines and then over the tops of the mountains."

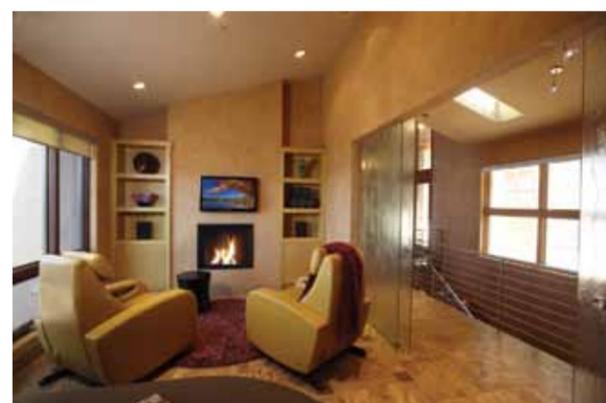
The spectacular views of the Rocky Mountains, which Bethke calls the home's "artwork," also dictated the interior space. The home has an open plan, which will be great when there are a lot of houseguests, but Bethke also wanted the four-bedroom place to feel cozy when it's just Diehl and

Sonnenburg there. She achieved that multiuse effect with subtle lighting that brightens some areas while recessing others and with varying ceiling heights that create layered spaces within large rooms.

Another challenge was color. Sonnenburg and Bethke separately describe each other as "not afraid of color." (Bethke knew she wanted to work with the couple the minute she saw the eye-popping tangerine wall in their Minnetonka home.)

But it turned out Bethke had strong ideas about Colorado color. Purple, for instance: Purple mountains' majesty? Yes. Purple kitchen? A big fat no.

"She picked out purple countertops. She loved them. But I remember saying, 'OK, no. We can't have those



countertops in this house," recalled Bethke. "The challenge was to end up with organic colors she would love but that would be in harmony with the surroundings."

Sonnenburg also remembers the purple controversy. "At the time, I was,

**Some areas of the home take advantage of the elevation with nearly 360-degree views.**

**Each of the home's bedrooms has an ensuite bathroom, with a special shower in the master suite to soothe muscles that ache after long bike rides.**

like, 'Really? You're saying no?' But I just acquiesced, I guess. Honestly, when I think about my original ideas and the whole ambience I thought I wanted to experience, it's completely different from what we ended up with. We just listened to her expertise, and we love the result."

For the record, the final countertop features a neutral background that brings in touches of the oranges, greens and purples Sonnenburg loves.

#### PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

In addition to the look of their home, Diehl and Sonnenburg entrusted Bethke with ensuring it would suit them for years to come. That means thinking about many possibilities: wider-than-usual doors through which wheelchairs can pass if they're needed one day, shallow steps, slightly lowered counter-

tops for wheelchair accessibility, lighting and security that can be controlled from a central location and stone floors that won't trip up unsteady feet.

Most of these touches are so subtle a visitor wouldn't notice them. Said Bethke, "I don't want it to look like An Old Person's Home, but I do want it to be able to accommodate you as you age so you don't have to modify spaces later."

Meanwhile, the couple is eager to enjoy their second home, indoors and out.

"Whenever we arrive, I'm like a kid at Christmas," said Sonnenburg. "We drive down this long road along this beautiful ridge and I have to pinch myself that we had the fortune to find this beautiful property. I can't wait to be there!" ■

*Chris Hewitt is the movie critic for the Pioneer Press and a regular contributor to Spaces.*