

# BRICK

ARCHITECTURE  
and LANDSCAPE



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# Meet the

# Architect

An interview with  
Nasrin Barbee, AIA

**Q** In your experience, what determines the specification of brick in your residential projects?

**A** “The decision to utilize brick is determined through interactive communication between the architect and the client. While clients are sometimes hesitant to use brick because of the price, they still want to use it if nothing else than for flooring and paving applications. Major factors that play a role in the final decision are image, durability, aesthetic qualities, design flexibility and



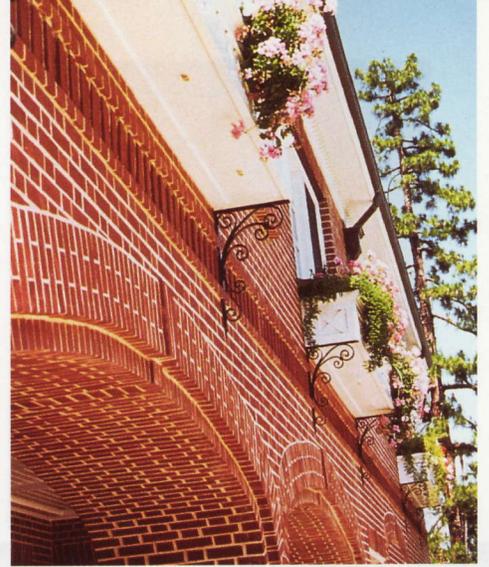
low maintenance. Brick offers so many advantages in these areas that it is hard to overlook.”

Ms. Barbee is one of four partners in Choate Associates, Architects. With offices in Los Angeles and San Diego, the firm has been designing new homes, residential remodels, multiple dwelling

and commercial projects for over 20 years. Ninety percent of their projects are in the medium to high range residential market, and many of these projects use brick. “About fifteen to twenty percent utilize brick as an exterior material and a higher percentage utilize brick for the hearth, interior walls, fireplaces, paving and landscape elements,” says Ms. Barbee.

Senior Partner, Peter Choate, and Ms. Barbee designed a recently completed large major remodel and addition project on a Beverly Hills residence which won an award in the Residential Remodel / Renovation category in the 1993 BRIC Award Program annually sponsored by the Brick Institute of California. Ms. Barbee explains that, “The existing house had ‘used’ brick veneer, but the house unfortunately had neither a particular architectural style nor did it take advantage of its finish material potential. For this reason, the existing brick veneer was stripped and re-used elsewhere on the site. However, in the remodel and addition design, brick was still an important exterior veneer material and the owner’s Number One choice. The most important reasons were durability, low maintenance and the multitude of detail and aesthetic possibilities. Brick enabled us to enhance the quality and the Georgian style of the house. Through the use of various patterns and design elements that created subtle elegance, an Old English style home was re-born in Southern California.”

In discussing why she likes to use brick, she declares that, “No other material quite communicates the image of strength, charm, and elegance as brick.” She believes that the design flexibility of brick lends a sense of architectural history from the charm, warmth and strength of the Georgian style, to the charm, warmth and timelessness of a country ranch look. Ms. Barbee continues, “The



choice of color plays a large role in the final outcome and image of a home or building.” She adds, “Brick allows you to create different moods from warm appealing residential applications to cooler and more formal atmospheres like institutional buildings.”

Ms. Barbee says that while clients tend to look at the initial costs of using brick, she encourages them to also consider the long-term benefits such as its durability and low-maintenance virtues. She also reminds them that, “Brick is a natural resource that is locally available and is a great material for thermal mass use. It is also environmentally friendly and can be recycled over and over again.”

Ms. Barbee knows that homes that use brick have a higher perceived value and greater curb appeal than homes without brick. She cites a personal experience as an example: “Years ago, we moved into a tract home that looked like any other house in the neighborhood. We added a brick entranceway, walkway and planter boxes and were amazed at the response our house received. People actually stopped by to tell us how much they loved the house with the brick application.”

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*Note:* This project also appears on the cover of this issue.

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*Ms. Nasrin Barbee completed both her design and Masters Degree at UCLA. A member of AIA and ICBO, she has been a partner of Choate & Associates, Architects since 1982.* ■