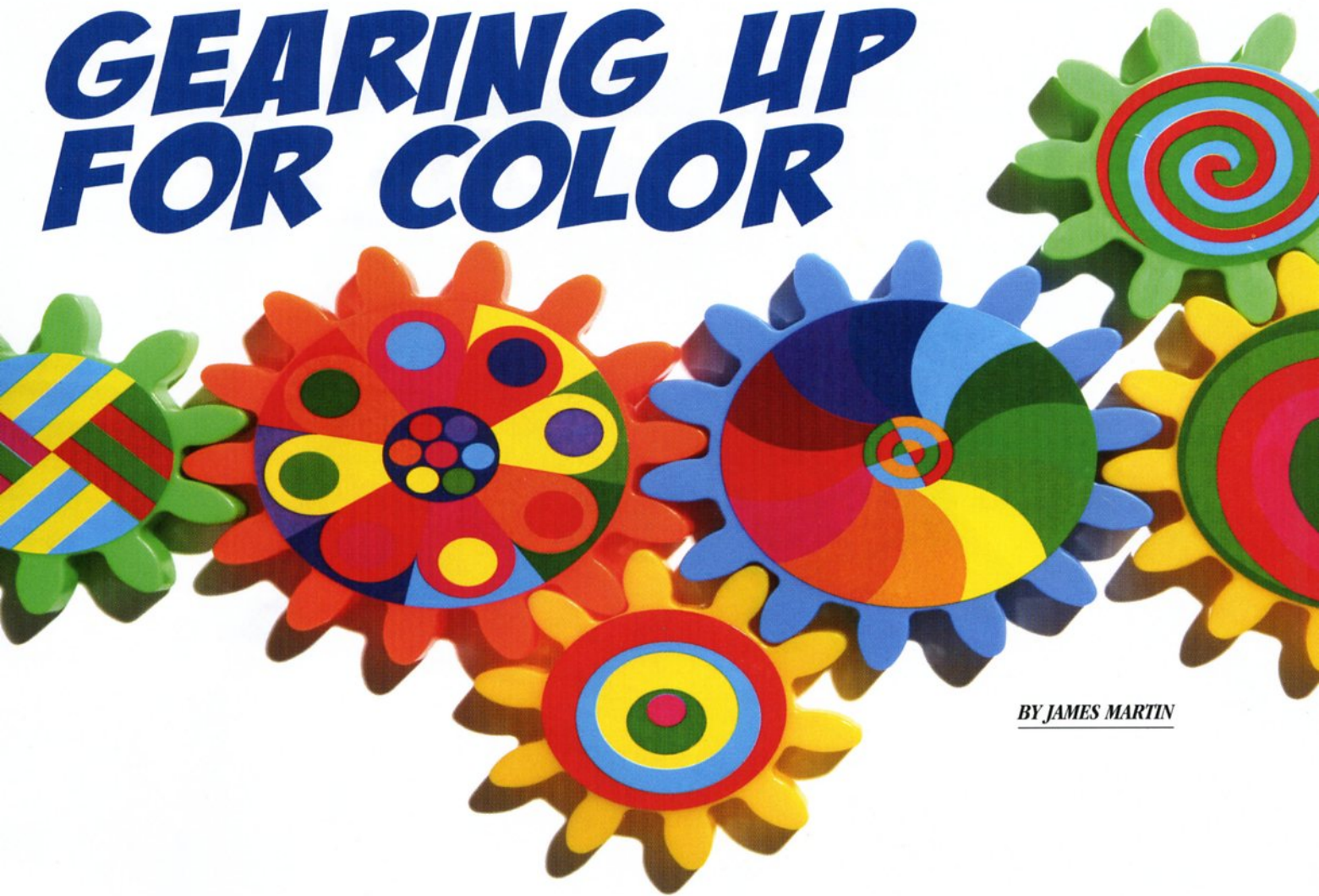


GEARING UP FOR COLOR



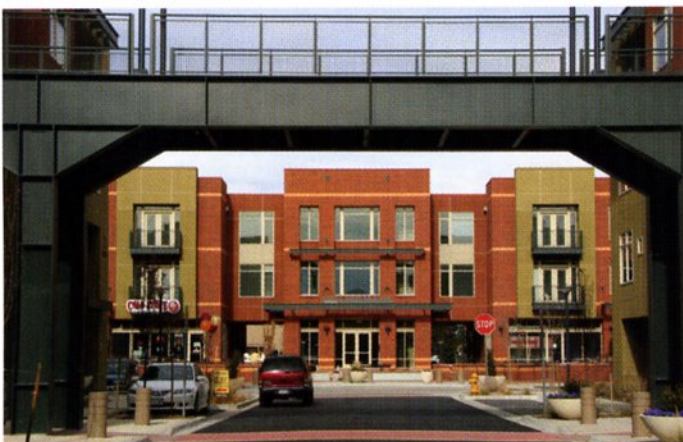
BY JAMES MARTIN

America is in the midst of a complete redefinition of its living spaces, land use and mobility. Concern for the environment is spreading rapidly across middle America, from elementary school children to Baby Boomers who have rekindled their faded social conscious. Predating the green movement, the New Urbanist movement marks the building industry's return to traditional block and alley living. The movement maximizes density and emphasizes the need to embrace neighbors and interactive living situations. Environmental benefits include less need to drive and more maximization of space. The apartment industry, already geared up to support this lifestyle, is seeing the advent of more closely grouped buildings on smaller parcels of land.

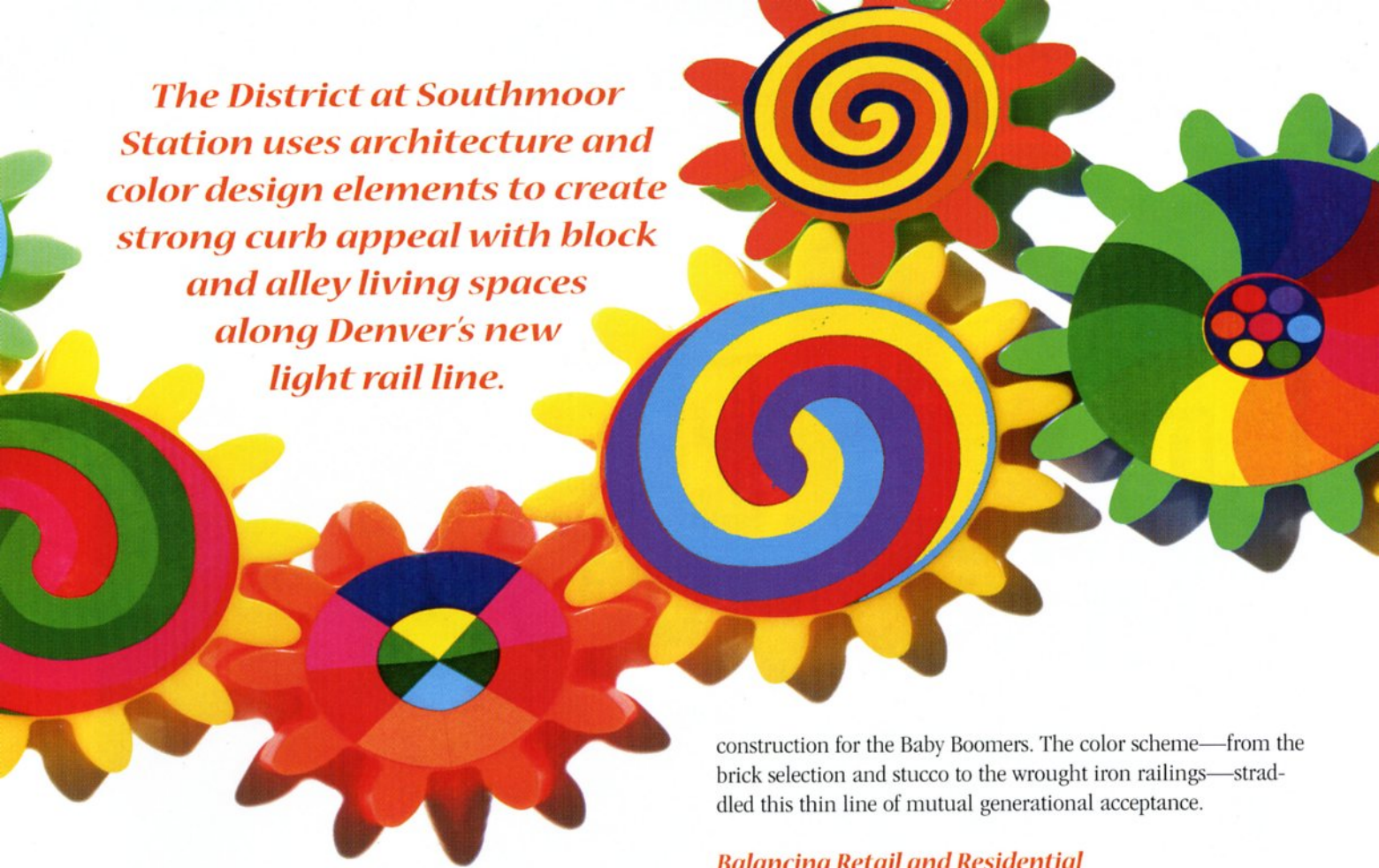
Generations X and Y have an affection for the urban experience, which is driving the New Urbanist trend. These younger adults want to live, work and play in vibrant inner cities. There is also a burgeoning group of Baby Boomers who, having raised their children in the suburbs, are craving a freer, more active life without the demands of maintaining lawns and large homes. Both ends of the age spectrum are creating a huge market for living accommodations in urban settings.

The District at Southmoor Station in Denver, owned by Pacific Properties and managed by The Morgan Group, is a variation on that theme, coupling new urbanism and suburban living. Influenced by this intersection of trends, Southmoor Station is one of the first projects in the area to take advantage of a revival of public transportation systems, which are springing up in cities around the country.

Developers built the community, replete with shopping and restaurants steps away from home, in conjunction with plans for



The District at Southmoor Station uses architecture and color design elements to create strong curb appeal with block and alley living spaces along Denver's new light rail line.



a station stop on Denver's new light rail system. For many residents, the community is the best of both worlds: a close-knit neighborhood that is a quick commute on the light rail to cultural amenities, clubs, restaurants and work.

Vision for Curb Appeal

Mike Mulhern of Denver's Mulhern Architects, which designed the District at Southmoor Station, said he envisioned the community to be a key piece in leading the area to "re-evolve and re-densify to become an expanded urban environment."

He said his idea was to start with an economical above-ground parking structure and wrap residences around it, essentially making them a façade for the parking structure.

The site is well placed to be the prototype for this type of light rail corridor living. The location has ample visibility, situated at the intersection of the north/south interstate and a major east/west thoroughfare. Because the community is the most noticeable structure in the immediate area, it was essential to make a strong statement with curb appeal.

The project designers wanted a look that was sharp and trendy for the younger generation, yet something that conveyed a sense of high quality and solid

construction for the Baby Boomers. The color scheme—from the brick selection and stucco to the wrought iron railings—straddled this thin line of mutual generational acceptance.

Balancing Retail and Residential

The building facing the east/west road is the commercial center of the project. Most of the initial retail is located on its ground floor to appeal to both the community's residents and to the local neighborhood and commuters, as well. The upper floors are designed as office or live/work spaces.

The color scheme for a residential-over-retail project must create a look that is more urban and edgy than homey and comfortable—a look that predominates suburban apartment



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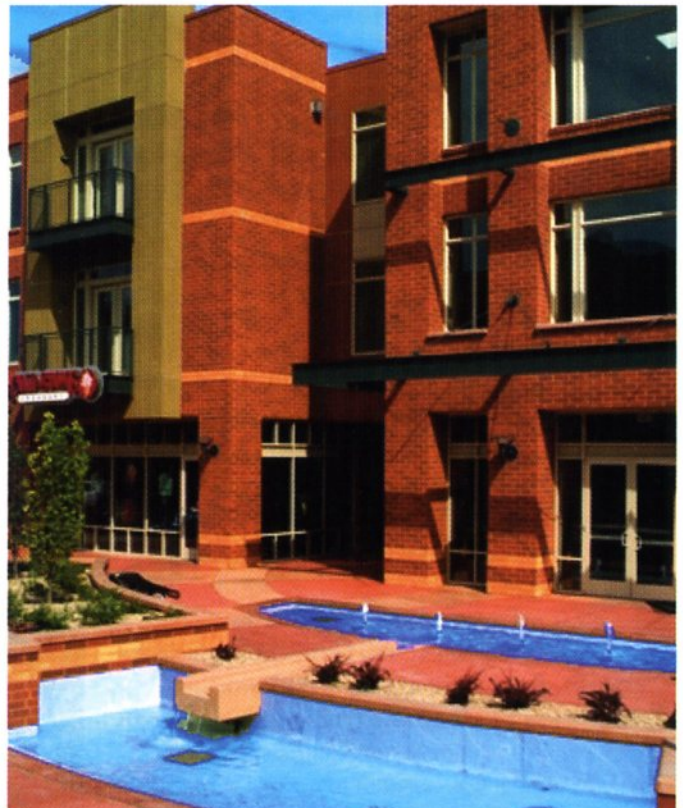
communities. It's essential to draw attention to the retail aspect, which is what sets the style apart and creates the urban feel.

The storefronts on the street level have a solid brick façade to define the shops and to create a sense of a strong supporting element for the upper floors; the windows are light colored to make the shops feel open and inviting.

Bright panels of colors define the mass of the architecture, creating the feeling of the architectural variety of an urban streetscape. The key to strong presentation is to balance the placement of color and not allow any one section of the buildings to stand apart. Designers chose the value (light to dark scale) of the colored elements to match the value of the brick to give the sense of solidity and present a unified look.

The colors are warm and friendly with cutting-edge hues; however, the designers carefully chose them to wear well as the buildings age. Using colors that are too trendy often results in a building that quickly looks out of date. For example, the two colors of the brick give texture and context to the architecture while blending nicely among the other colors. The stucco along with window color has a white instead of a metal finish to give a homey and warm ambiance to a project with an industrial scale.

The District at Southmoor Station has become a major success and is a model for development that is happening all along the new light rail corridor in the Denver Metro area. ■



James Martin, owner of The Color People, Denver, is a specialist in architectural color and was responsible for the color design of this project. He may be reached at www.colorpeople.com.