

# resolution: 4 architecture

BEACH HOUSE | SUB-URBAN HOUSE | HOUSE IN THE WOODS | SUMMER RETREAT

The stereotype about prefab is that it creates houses all alike, all in a row. But the reality is that, instead of mass production being the driving force behind what is created, mass customization is much more often the approach. Within a system, an almost limitless number of designs and houses can be created, according to the individual buyer's needs, wants, and budget; the site; the region of the country; the climate; and the tastes of the moment.

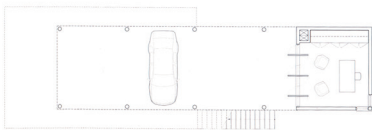
One of the most important developers of such a system is a New York architecture firm called Resolution: 4 Architecture. What principals Joe Tanney and Robert Luntz call their "methodology" can be used to give life to a range of different and unique houses. "It's impossible that one home is right for everybody," says Tanney. With their system, the client enters a distinct world in which the elements the

architects offer become the creative tools that will be used to make the home that is right for them.

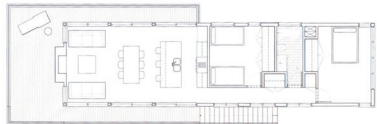
The main elements are modules that are prefabricated and brought in on a truck, thus restricting them to dimensions of 16 feet wide, 60 feet long, and 11 feet high. The architects' focus, then, was to design with individuality and distinction within those modules, what Tanney calls "thinking *inside* the box." The modules are separated into those for communal use—living, dining, kitchen areas; those for private use—bed and bath, office and media rooms; and accessory modules containing closets and storage and hallways. Each of these is referred to as a "bar," and the bars may be combined in dozens of different ways. When assembled, they are an aesthetically pleasing exercise in geometry, with all their various configurations and patterns. Resolution: 4 Architecture has developed 36 separate house design types with the use of one or two or three bars in combination with one another.

The Standard Bar design uses one 870-square-foot module to create two bedrooms and all other areas of a normal house. The roof is pitched in an inverted design allowing light in through the top. The firm's Beach House, which was built for a simple lifestyle—as Tanney says, "two guys and three dogs"—

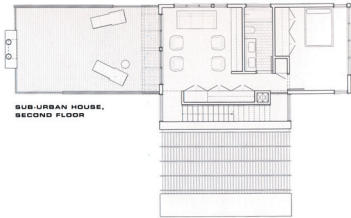
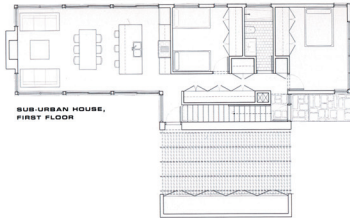
**RIGHT:** The Standard Bar design uses one module to create two bedrooms and all other areas of a normal house. The Beach House is a variation of this design where one bar is elevated on a box to create a carport below. The house was further customized by using materials that have a strong relationship to the surrounding landscape.



BEACH HOUSE, FIRST FLOOR



BEACH HOUSE, SECOND FLOOR



is a variation of this design. The module is set onto a small boxlike space on one end, in which sits an office, and lifted up by columns all along the rest of the module, creating a carport underneath. The living space is enclosed by glass and faces the water for views, and off of it is a balcony. “The materials have a strong relationship to the landscape,” says Tanney, referring to the corrugated metal that echoes the color of the ocean and that was custom chosen for the house.

The Two-Story Bar doubles the space, with one module stacked on another. The firm’s Sub-Urban

House is an example of this type, with 1,430 square feet and three bedrooms. As with most houses in the system, this one can be customized with an office, fourth bedroom, mudroom of 180 square feet, laundry room of 75 square feet, one- or two-car garage, poolhouse, wood deck, all kinds of storage and basement areas, and a media room or studio. As with much modern design, the aesthetic is in the space—what makes it beautiful is its simultaneous simplicity and utility.

Two-bar modules for houses make interesting designs because of the various ways space gets used and the different patterns that are created. When two modules intersect, for example, the space they create on the outside of the house can make right angles that form small courtyards, an attractive addition. In the case of Resolution: 4 Architecture’s House in the Woods, a home they created for a North Carolina couple on a site surrounded by trees, a communal module was crossed with a private module, so one

**ABOVE and RIGHT:** The plan for the Sub-Urban House shows how the Two-Story Bar system works. Private spaces and communal spaces are put in separate bars and then crossed at different places to create house designs, or smaller houses are created with one bar that is a module for prefabrication.

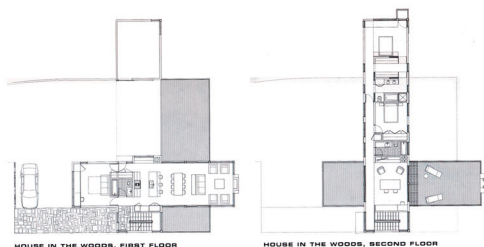




wing contains public spaces and the other one more private spaces. Making the home meant using the communal and private modules and adding a stair module, storage module, and roof module. All modules were brought by truck to the site and placed onto a concrete foundation with a crane. This foundation contains all the mechanical systems for the house. Like other houses in the system, wood framing was used in combination with prefab elements already in use in other kinds of prefab buildings and adapted to this system. The home is customized with terraces on two sides and both floors of the house, a screened-in porch, and an outdoor shower to bring the owners that much closer to their landscape. Further customization includes materials like cedar siding set horizontally, bamboo floors, and lots of high-quality aluminum-framed windows.

Other two-bar designs include the Two-Bar L, which Luntz describes as an “elegant and simple crossing of two axes,” and which provides 1,790 square feet and three bedrooms; the Two-Bar Slip, which, at 1,740 square feet, has the two bars parallel but joining at their ends to make a common living area and four bedrooms on either end for a perfect large-family or duplex situation; and the Two-Bar Bridge with Sleeping Porch at 1,960 square feet with a bridging bar of two bedrooms on the second floor and a sleeping porch off of a terrace.

Among the three-bar designs is the Three-Bar Bridge with Guest House, the largest of the config-



urations, shaped like a “Z” and with 2,660 square feet of floor space.

From this design came Summer Retreat, a home in East Hampton, New York, that includes four bedrooms so it can be easily rented out for the summer. This house was customized down to budget—the owner computed what it could be rented for and that figured directly into the budgeting of the building. The house also includes a media room, a sleeping porch, a six-vehicle carport, and a pool area.

**LEFT:** House in the Woods was created for a North Carolina couple who didn't have a large amount of money to spend. The houses in the system cost about \$125 per square foot, depending on the area of the country. **ABOVE:** The house is an example of the two-bar system, where public and private spaces cross in separate bars.



Other three-bar designs include the Three-Bar T, which has 1,575 square feet of floor space, four bedrooms, and two courtyards formed by the crossing of the T, and the Three-Bar Bridge with Three-Story Tower, at 2,530 square feet one of the most ambitious of the designs, with a sleeping porch at the top of the tower.

**ABOVE AND RIGHT:** Summer Retreat, which was created for a single man who wanted to rent out the house during summers, is an example of the most complicated of the designs, the Three-Bar Bridge with Guest House. Three bars intersect, creating 2,660 square feet in a "Z" pattern.

Houses designed from the firm's system, the partners say, can be ready about nine months after they are ordered. Tanney estimates that houses from this system cost an average of \$125 per square foot, depending on the area of the country in which the house is built and added details such as fireplaces and the like. He compares that to the cost of their stick-built homes, which run about \$250 to \$400 a square foot. The prices are low, Tanney says, partly because the element of a brand new design is taken out of the process and because every place that square footage can be maximized in the modules, it is. "Because of the smart square footage savings and the savings that we can get from making these modules in a factory, we believe that we can increase the quality of the detailing, that we can increase the quality of the materials," says Tanney.

Tanney and Luntz developed their practice largely by designing Manhattan lofts, which are often deep and narrow, and brought this experience to bear with the modules. Tanney thinks of the homes in the system as "freestanding lofts," with some of the same specific and efficient design approaches such as sculptural built-in furniture, the building of storage space into the walls, and the compact layout of bathrooms and other functional spaces. Many high-quality elements are employed: bathrooms, for instance, are then finished with materials like glass tile; the kitchens may use steel, slate, or limestone and maple cabinets; the interior doors may be frosted glass; the exterior



siding can be cedar. But the firm also saves money by using low-cost materials in imaginative ways, such as corrugated metal or cement board as a hip exterior finishing material, utilitarian light fixtures that bring industrial chic, and fiberboard or recycled sawdust for wall finishes that have a fresh look.

Tanney feels that systems like this will "integrate the architect in with society," enabling people to afford homes designed by architects. He sees the success of

approaches like Resolution: 4 Architecture's as a natural evolution from the increased focus on design that can be seen in other forms throughout the country, from firms like Design Within Reach that sell affordable furniture to retailers like Target that are hiring designers and architects to make their products. If we have Banana Republic clothes, the logic goes, shouldn't we have well-designed houses? That's the goal of today's prefab—better design for less money. ■