

# contract



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# the comforts of home

For visiting families, the Ronald McDonald House of San Francisco is a temporary home while children are treated in local hospitals—for the A&D community, its renovation was a chance to unite through design

By Katie Weeks  
Photography by David Wakely

Having a seriously ill child is a parent's worst nightmare. Everyday tasks take a backseat to hospital bills, treatment options, and bedside visits. For families that must travel for treatment, the last thing they want to worry about after a long day at the hospital is where they'll spend the night. Which is why the Ronald McDonald House of San Francisco provides a much-needed haven.

"Our goal is to offer a beautiful, soothing, and healing environment—a safe place to return to after a day at the hospital," says Peggy McGuire, executive director of the Ronald McDonald House. Since it was built in 1989, the building has housed more than 2,500 families of children undergoing treatment for life-threatening illnesses. While most families stay once for an average of two weeks, some have stayed nearly a year and others have made multiple visits. But after 13 years, it was time for an update.

In 2001, the board of directors committed \$100,000 to address structural concerns including upgrading the exhaust, fire safety, and electrical systems, removing an unused fireplace, expanding public spaces, providing adequate workspace for staff and office volunteers, and giving families email access. "We expanded our communal space to bring family members out of the isolation of their rooms to meet each other," McGuire says. "They're going through an incredible shared experience no matter what the diagnosis."

Steve Rajninger of Locus Architecture and David Galbraith of Re/Construction, both in San Francisco, worked together on redesigning the house's center atrium and planned for the expansion. At the same time, the repairs provided a chance to reexamine the house's interiors. "We took a structural project and turned it into a complete makeover," says McGuire. Inspired by a local showcase house where various designers each redesigned a room, Ronald McDonald House's then-development director Nancy McClusky-Moore contacted local designer Nanci Scoular, who had helped organize the project, about accomplishing a similar feat with the Ronald McDonald House.

"I loved what Ronald McDonald House was about and wanted to help," recalls Scoular. Armed with the title of designer recruitment, Scoular set out to recruit cohorts to tackle the house's 10 bedrooms and nine bathrooms. "Residential designers do this work on an everyday basis, but I thought it would be fun for designers who do office spaces, institutional work, hospitals, and educational facilities to have

*The Ronald McDonald House renovation includes increasing public space like dining rooms (opposite, top left) and living rooms (opposite, top right) to draw families out of their rooms. The aesthetic of these spaces, designed by TSAO Design Group, plays off the natural light from an atrium by Lotus Architecture (opposite bottom).*



*Using a similar palette, the designers wanted a sophisticated, boutique hotel feel, as seen in TSAO's (top left) and Babey Moulton Jue & Booth's rooms (top right). Throughout the rooms, small accents, like intriguing textiles in RMW's (middle left) and Huntsman's rooms (bottom right), and sheer curtains in IA's room (middle right), added personality.*

## Project Summary

a chance to do something like this,” she says of targeting contract firms. Although hesitant to ask her friends to donate time, effort, and materials during a down economy, she was overwhelmed by enthusiastic replies.

The firms on board were a who’s-who of local talent: Locus Architecture, TSAO Design Group, ADD, Inc., Babey Moulton Jue & Booth, Gordon H. Chong & Partners, Huntsman Architectural Group, IA Interior Architects, RMW, SmithGroup, and SMWM. “It looked like the kind of thing where many hands make light work,” says Jim Archibald, interior designer and associate at RMW. Tony Garret, principal at IA, agrees. “It gave everyone a feeling of contributing to the community and doing something related to design that could be a fun diversion from normal work,” he says.

The overriding goal was to leave the house’s previous look and feel behind in favor of a more calming environment. The original aesthetic “was filled with lots of children’s references, felt very childlike, and was loud and expressive,” says Ellen Schumm, principal at TSAO. “When you come home, what you really want is something quiet, calming, serene, restful, and warm. This was an opportunity to create a boutique hotel environment without the edge.”

To design their rooms, the groups received guidelines to ensure that the project would end up being cohesive without each firm trying to outdo the others. Color schemes had to be synchronized with common spaces. Bedrooms had to be practical, taking into consideration that the families provide primary maintenance. They had to be functional and child-friendly. The existing maple furniture—armoire, desk, and full-size bed—had to remain and could not be altered. “Dealing with the existing furniture and trying to do something was a challenge,” says John Kastl, associate at Babey Moulton Jue & Booth. “Some of the rooms had too much furniture so we ended up simplifying.”

Another stipulation: Any new supplies, from carpeting to furnishings to paint, needed to be donated. “It’s a challenge to work in a completely donated situation,” notes Schumm. “You had to be nimble with quick changes in case something fell through.” Luckily, the designers found manufacturers more than willing to help, including Benjamin Moore, Luna Textiles, Herman Miller, Knoll, and Steelcase. “The list of donations is incredible,” says Scoular.

After designers completed their concepts, they had to work around the families—the house was occupied during the entire renovation, which was completed in September 2002. “In spite of tremendous disruption, we never received a complaint,” says McGuire. “The families were so grateful to be here and understood the intent of the project,” she adds. In the end, both designers and house residents benefited from the makeover. “Design can be very competitive and often all about the ego, but this project wasn’t about that,” says Mark Harbick, AIA, design partner at Huntsman Architectural Group. He recalls how everyone came together, sharing materials and ideas to create a strong camaraderie. “It wasn’t a competition,” he says, “this was about the project itself, about the house.”

### Public Spaces

**Atrium architect:** Locus, Steve Rajninger; Re/Construction, David Galbraith. **Designer:** TSAO Design Group; Leora Goren, Allyson Kovas, Ellen Schumm, Niki Vazifdar, Tom Worden. **Paint:** Benjamin Moore, Creative Paint & Wallpaper. **Carpet:** Bentley Prince Street, Rafael Carpets. **Lighting:** C.J. Welch-North, IKEA, Juno Lighting, Lightsmiths Design Group, Nessen Lighting, Nova Industries, Sea Gull Lighting, Zurier Co. **Upholstery:** The Designtex Group, Nancy McCluskey-Moore. **Seating:** Brayton, CRI, Herman Miller, One Workplace, OP Contract, Service West, Steelcase. **Dining, occasional, banquette tables:** Vecta, West Coast Industries. **Surfacing:** Butler-Johnson Corporation, DuPont Corian, National Kitchen & Bath Association. **Laminate:** Wilsonart. **Furniture refinishing:** VIDA. **Hardware/storage:** DF/m, Hafele, In-Sink Erator, Kohler, Quality Doors. **Screens:** AFS Creates. **Logo:** Lebasi Lashley.

### Bedroom 1

**Designer:** TSAO Design Group; Leora Goren, Allyson Kovas, Ellen Schumm, NikiVazifdar, Tom Worden. **Electric:** Dynalectic. **Construction:** Hathaway Dinwiddie Construction Co. **Paint:** Benjamin Moore, Creative Paint & Wallpaper. **Lighting, frames, table, shelving, drapery hardware:** IKEA. **Flooring:** B.R. Funsten, Interface. **Textiles:** Luna Textiles. **Sconces:** Nessen Lighting, C.J. Welch-North. **Hardware/accessories:** Bauerware, Gatco, Kohler. **Bed linens, artwork:** TSAO Design Group, Nancy McCluskey-Moore.

### Bedroom 2

**Designer:** Huntsman Architectural Group; Mark Harbick, Aaron Vinson, Alison Smith. **Paint:** Benjamin Moore, Creative Paint & Wallpaper. **Lighting:** Artemide, IKEA. **Carpet:** Conklin Brothers, Karastan Contract. **Bed linens:** Donghia, Maharam. **Headboard frame:** George Slack Cabinetmakers. **Drapery:** Henry Calvin Fabrics, Installation Service Corp. **Fabric:** ICF Group, Maharam, Pollack. **Lounge seating:** IKEA. **Hardware:** Kohler. **Plants:** Floorcraft Nursery. **Upholstery:** Mary Cravens Design.

### Bedrooms 5, 6

**Designer:** IA Interior Architects; Tony Garrett, Aaron Wong, Debbie Ohlsson, Anthony Luk, Frederick Regala, Shad Beazer. **Carpet:** Rafael Carpets, Masland, Shaw. **Drapery:** Ron & Rachel Rothe. **Paint:** Benjamin Moore, Creative Paint & Wallpaper. **Bedding, drapery:** IA Interior Architects. **Fabric:** Luna Textiles, Maharam. **Wall base:** Johnsonite. **Sconces:** Lighting Systems, Sea Gull Lighting/Zurier Company. **Artwork, mirrors:** Nextmonet. **Hardware/accessories:** Bed Bath & Beyond, Gatco, Kohler, NuTone/Zurier Co.

### Bedroom 7

**Designer:** RMW; Jim Archibald, Jennifer Narozniak, Robbin McDonald. **Carpet:** Rafael Carpets, Shaw Contract. **Paint:** Benjamin Moore, Creative Paint & Wallpaper. **Glass tiles:** Ann Sacks Tile & Stone. **Lighting:** Artemide, Pottery Barn. **Bedding:** Henry Calvin Fabrics, Knoll Textiles, Suzanne Tick Inc., Malatesta & Company. **Seating:** ICF Group, Risa Ograskin Associates. **Shutters:** San Francisco Shutter Company. **Wall base:** Johnsonite, Spectra Contract Flooring. **Closets:** Closet Dimensions. **Hardware/accessories:** Kohler, NuTone, Waterworks. **Artwork:** Robyn Color Labs, S. Conway Frame Studio, Susan Rattenbury, Ted Hochschwender.

### Bedroom 10

**Designer:** Babey Moulton Jue & Booth; Jon Kastl. **Carpentry:** Leo Ickovic Construction. **Flooring:** Abbey Carpet, Beronio Lumber, Clayton Miller, Torrilhon. **Paint:** Benjamin Moore. **Fabric, furniture, art:** A. Rudin, Babey Moulton Jue & Booth, It Fits. **Artwork:** Elizabeth Weiner Fine Art International, Steve Henry. **Drapery:** Henry Calvin Fabrics, Trickey Studio. **Floor lamp:** John Anderson. **Hardware/accessories:** Dornbracht USA, Kohler, Lloyd Marketing, Paige Glass.