

# THE BUILD

JOSH CUTHBERTSON NEXT GEN ARCHITECT



JOSH CUTHBERTSON WALKED OUT OF Montana State University with a master's degree in architecture and right into an economy that had collapsed like a skyscraper built on sand.

A mere two years earlier, in 2006, Cuthbertson's professors were rhapsodizing about the opportunities awaiting students in the five-year competitive program, saying the prospects to reshape the world were unparalleled.

It was a sobering experience for a young man who knew he wanted to be an architect by the time he learned to walk and was drawing three-dimensional renderings of houses by the age of 7.

Undaunted, Cuthbertson says he sat at his computer for eight hours a day and applied to architectural firms all over the country. "I filled out 250 applications and I got three responses: Billings, Denver and Redding," he recalls.

He went for interviews in Billings, Mont., and Denver; for the Redding response, he had a long phone conversation with James Theimer, the principal architect at Trilogy Architecture.

"I had been searching for an employee for about a year," Theimer recalls. "It was pretty much a search throughout the United States. After several interviews and conversations that went nowhere, Josh and I connected with a telephone conversation that lasted an hour and a half. ▶

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"After the conversation, I thought this would be a good fit for us. I was struck by his enthusiasm, his passion for architecture and his willingness to explore strange new places like Redding, California," Theimer says.

On the other end of the line in Bozeman, Mont., Cuthbertson picked up on a good vibe as well. "James brought me out here for a week. I had no interest in Redding but I was interested in James' work. He took me out to RSA (Redding School of the Arts, which was under construction) and explained his whole view. After that, I was committed."

Cuthbertson shares the goals and ideals of Architecture for Humanity, a San Francisco-based nonprofit organization that uses the power of professional design to help build a more sustainable future. "I felt James had that same passion, and it's really inspiring to work for someone like that."

Cuthbertson, 28, had the chance to apply those ideals through his work with Theimer and the Trilogy crew on RSA, a state-of-the-art 77,000-square-foot K-8 charter school that became the first new school campus in the world to receive a platinum certification by the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED).

In architecture circles, Cuthbertson says Trilogy is the talk of the town for its ability to pull off such a design feat with just a five-member firm (six if you count Murdoch, the Golden Retriever listed as the firm's morale officer).

Within the first six months of working at Trilogy, Cuthbertson was certified as an accredited professional through the LEED program. "That was awesome," he says. "It's just been a wild ride after RSA."

In addition to working on projects like transforming the former Redding Christian Supply building on Churn Creek Road into The Stirring, Cuthbertson is involved with projects in New Jersey and Wyoming, where Trilogy is now licensed to work.

His arsenal of tools includes Building Information Modeling, a high-tech method of design that allows him to construct three-dimensional structures on a computer and extract the plans from that virtual building.

Cuthbertson is classified as an architectural designer and is working his way through the long series of internships and exams required to become licensed as an architect. Theimer says he's enjoyed mentoring Cuthbertson as he grows in his profession.

"We like having the opportunity to have someone who has had the academics and give them the opportunity to translate that into reality," Theimer says. Of his protégé, he adds: "He's a sponge. He soaks up everything, he listens, he pays attention and then he tries to apply it in what he does, which is a good trait."

When he's not at his desk, Cuthbertson has immersed himself in a community he says he's grown to appreciate. He's been active with Catalyst Redding Young Professionals and Girls Inc. of the Northern Sacramento Valley and he serves on the Viva Downtown Design Committee.

His first love, though, remains architecture, and his passion for sustainable and environmental design hasn't diminished in the least. "It has to be something that is beautiful that works. I want to design a better city." •



**Jon Lewis** has been a writer for the past 31 years, working at newspapers in Woodland, Davis, Vacaville and Redding. A longtime San Francisco Giants fan, his interests include golf, fishing and steering clear of what appears to be a resident cat-cougar hybrid. He has called Redding home for 25 years.