

# BIZSMARTS

## HOW I'M ...

# Creating a new family living paradigm

VETERAN ARCHITECT BOB APEL'S DIRECTED LIFESTYLE KEEPS FAMILIES TOGETHER

BY EVAN WEESE

eweese@bizjournals.com

614-220-5450, @EvanWeeseBiz1st



Bob Apel has seen plenty of change over more than 40 years in architecture and design, but he believes the industry is ripe for innovation.

The semi-retired co-founder of Columbus-based M&A Architects Inc. is taking on a new challenge in residential real estate, introducing a flexible unit to meet the needs of a family through its life cycle.

Apel's patented and trademarked "directed lifestyle" concept works like this: Divide a larger house into two unequal units connected by a hotel suite-like doorway. The home evolves with a family as it moves through early adulthood, child rearing and retirement, with flexibility for unforeseen situations such as divorces or adults with special needs.

Believing so firmly in the idea, Apel moved from his home of 38 years on Hayden Run Road in Columbus to a condo community in Hilliard. He lives in a 2,150-square-foot unit with his daughter and her 8-year-old son in an attached 1,380-square-foot unit.

Apel spoke with *Columbus Business First* about his directed lifestyle concept, condensed and edited for clarity:

**How does this work in practice?** Take everything you know about a house, all your experience growing up and everything, just put that in a box and set it on a shelf. Wipe the slate clean, like you haven't thought about a house before. I took the whole house and broke it into two pieces. You start off in the smaller unit for three or four years - you're just married, taking risks in your career, going to Ohio State football games with your friends. You start to raise a family and you move to the big side, and you do that for 10 years. And you have a 10-year-old and anybody else who's come along. Then you open the doors like a hotel suite, and you take over the whole house for 15 years. That gets you through middle school, high school and college. Then you want to start downsizing, but mama still wants Thanksgiving at her house, so you move back to the big side. And you either rent that small side out as a mother-in-law suite, or you end up selling the small side to one of your kids. And it's paid for by now so you carry the mortgage as part of your retirement. In three or four years when they're ready to start a family, you



PHOTOS BY JANET ADAMS

Bob Apel built a home in his patented directed lifestyle concept. He lives on one side and his daughter and grandson live on the other.

move back to the small one. When it comes time to go to the nursing home, you've got the two mortgages to help pay for it.

**Has it made your family's life better?** Oh, I think so. It's made my daughter's life better and her son's life better.

**Why do think directed lifestyle can take off now?** What is the biggest single market of people that need to

do something in real estate right now? Boomers, to downsize. It also gives them an avenue to, once they do that, take that money and turn it into an income source. As a market target, they're the biggest market. I think this is a God-given solution to some self-inflicted problems that we have, and I'm just entrusted to get it out. I'm not responsible for how people take it or what they do with it. People that have ears to hear will grasp it and their

## ► CLOSER LOOK

### DIRECTED LIFESTYLE

**Business:** Design-flexible residential units to serve the changing needs in a family life cycle.

**Based:** Hilliard

**Founder:** Bob Apel

**Website:** directedlifestyle.com

lives will be better because they've embarked on this.

**How can you scale it?** If I collect enough people that it makes sense for (a developer) they'd be crazy not to. Once that happens, this will take on a life of its own. I've talked to so many people over the years. The social implications are much bigger than financial. A lot of people say I couldn't do it, I couldn't sell to my kids. That's because we've never thought of it this way. If you're in the third and fourth generation of doing this, you expect to live next door to mom and dad.

**Why take this on after a successful career?** I'm not doing this for money. I want to cast it out and see what happens. We've never thought of housing this way, it's just a learning curve.