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## Rebuilding Rwanda... (cont'd)

Seated in a bustling American-owned Kigali coffee shop buzzing with foreigners talking deals, Antoine Bigirimana explained it this way:

"Because this is a virgin economy, there is so much to be done, and you almost immediately have an impact," says Bigirimana, a Rwandan-born software engineer who was living overseas when his entire family was killed in the genocide. He returned, nonetheless, in 2002 to help the government teach computer literacy and develop anti-corruption software. Since then, he's spent nine months a year there working on various software projects. He is also Fogler's business partner.

"When I came back, I was convinced there would be a lot of sad faces everywhere, but there aren't. People have moved on," he says, motioning around the busy coffee shop. "There's opportunity to make a real difference here. How many times do you get to do something from scratch?"

### Rwanda, Boulder-style

That notion has always appealed to Carl Worthington. In 1962, the Boulder architect sat down at the drawing board to forge a plan for what would ultimately become the Denver Technological Center — an at-the-time revolutionary blending of mixed-use planning, underground utilities, architectural creativity and attention to landscaping.

Worthington was also instrumental in creating the Pearl Street Mall in Boulder, and the Boulder Greenways Program, a national model for green-space preservation in the face of rapid growth. So when Rwanda President Paul Kagame asked John Dick to recommend a few people to help him transform his capital city into an economic jewel of Africa, Worthington was on the short list.

"John called me one day and said, 'I have another project for you, but don't hang up until I finish telling you about it,'" recalls Worthington, who went on to arrange a Boulder tour for Kagame during his 2004 visit and show him a slide show retrospective about DTC. "At the end of the slide show, I said, 'We are now looking down on 20 million square feet of development that has been all privately done. It started with the vision, and then the money came and the corporations came.' That was what sold the president. He looked at me and said 'Carl, would you want to come to my country and help me rebuild it?'"

Today, Worthington's firm, Oz Architecture, is four years into an ambitious five-year, multimillion dollar contract with the Rwandan government. It chose Oz to develop a master plan for the 700-square-kilometer region of Kigali for the next 50 years, incorporating a new \$150 million international airport (which could break ground within the year), a new "Fitzsimons-like" medical complex that would draw patients from around East Africa, a new compact city center, and a new Rwandan Technological Center. Oz is collaborating with Denver design firm EDAW, environmental engineering firm Tetra Tech, Engineers Without Borders, numerous other Colorado players, and Kigali city planners to refine that vision. "They are trying to make Rwanda the most sustainable, high-tech, wired country in Africa, a little bit like what Singapore became," to Southeast Asia, Worthington says. "They are trying to re-invent the whole country."

It is a tall order, he says, "but it is possible."

Already, the Kigali region alone is home to nearly 1 million people, the vast majority of whom live in sprawling slums comprised of mud huts with tin roofs, no electricity or water, and no access to proper sewage. That population is expected to triple by 2020. Oz's aim: to help Kigali handle that growth without exacerbating its current problems; to preserve one of the nation's few commodities — its natural beauty; and to provide a road map for Rwanda as it strives to become a technological hub.

Again, the Rwandan government is not asking for fish, but rather, to be taught how to catch its own.

"We are really very conscious that everything we do is about trying to transfer the skills and the capacity for building to them," says Donna Rubinoff, planning project manager for Oz. "We don't just come in and hand them a report and leave."

The Oz team spent years rumbling through rutted Rwandan roads in four-wheel-drives, walking the hillsides, holding neighborhood workshops, exchanging transcontinental e-mails with Kigali planners and poring over not always reliable maps in search of potential directions for smart growth. In spring 2006, Oz unveiled a slick color PowerPoint presentation to government officials, painting a view of a new "city in the country," with long fingers of green space, and compact villages and towns in the surrounding region, absorbing growth without promoting sprawl.

In the poor areas, rainwater collection systems grace every rooftop, providing water and keeping erosion in check. Bio-gas digesters behind communal latrines miraculously transform human waste

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On screen, in the Oz office in Boulder in January, the plan looked a bit like a pipe dream to me. But in February in Kigali, I saw that some of the design principles were already being implemented.

Workers at a 336-home affordable housing complex called Batsinda — fashioned after a model home created by Colorado-based Engineers Without Borders and pictured in the Oz master plan — were just putting on the finishing touches for the families to move in.

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