

# National Business Local Balance



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MEDFORD, OR - The principals at Ogden Roemer Wilkerson Architecture came to Southern Oregon for the lifestyle and stayed for much more.

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Jim Roemer left San Diego for Southern Oregon 19 years ago. A life-long and avid outdoorsman, Jim travels the world in search of new adventures, but says that nothing compares to the natural beauty of Southern Oregon and the wonders of Oregon’s coast.

David Wilkerson was working in Manhattan with a three-hour commute to Long Island. Already feeling that he didn’t want to start a family with his New York lifestyle, September 11, 2001, sealed the deal. Now he and his family live in a “four-season outdoor paradise” where they can ski, bike and go boating, depending on the season.

by Chris Cook

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principal at Ogden Roemer Wilkerson Architecture

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The principals at Ogden Roemer Wilkerson Architecture came to Southern Oregon for the lifestyle and stayed for much more.

Ken Ogden “fled” from Los Angeles 20 years ago after a close brush with a gang-related drive-by shooting. He didn’t mind leaving the four-hour-a-day commute either. He loves living in a place where he can ski, kayak and hike. “It’s the best move we’ve ever made,” says Ken. He and his family with two young boys moved to a small farm near Ashland with horses, sheep and chickens—a setting that reminded him of his childhood home in England. Instead of LA’s emphasis on materialism, his kids did chores and learned responsibility and consequences for their actions, while having the freedom to roam the hills.

Jim Roemer left San Diego for Southern Oregon 19 years ago. He shares the love of outdoor recreation with his partners. Their office philosophy is “work to live, not live to work.” As an avid lifelong outdoorsman, Jim travels the world in search of new adventures, but says that nothing compares to the natural beauty of Southern Oregon and the wonders of Oregon’s coast.



David Wilkerson was working in Manhattan with a three-hour-a-day commute to Long Island. Already feeling that he didn’t want to start a family with his New York lifestyle, September 11, 2001, sealed the deal. It was great fortune that the meeting he was to attend that morning in the World Trade Center had been moved to the next day.

Now he and his family live in a “four-season outdoor paradise” where they can ski, bike and go boating, depending on the season. “There’s an extraordinary culture of volunteerism and shared values,” David says. “So many families around me are doing the same things. We are connected on many levels. We are on boards together, and coach each other’s kids’ athletics. We are connected to the community, our clients and colleagues.”

What all the partners found upon moving to Southern Oregon was a place that offered the best of everything — a cosmopolitan feel in a small city, world class arts and culture, quality medical care, great weather, boundless outdoor opportunities, a talented workforce, a supportive business climate and truly nice, genuine people who care about one another.

Specializing in design for commercial, educational, civic, medical and residential projects, Ogden Roemer Wilkerson Architecture is the largest architecture firm in Southern Oregon and is licensed in eight states. As part of their services they guide clients through development and permitting processes. In terms of development and permitting in Southern Oregon, “The people we are dealing with are genuine people,” Ken says. “They are willing to help versus being caught up in bureaucratic sterility. There’s not all the red tape that you find in larger areas, so the cost of development is less.

“I love the collegial respect that businesses have for one another,” Ken adds. “We help each other out, give advice when asked, care and respect one another. I still have clients in LA so I travel there regularly, but I can’t wait to fly back into our valley.” Ken’s partner David agrees wholeheartedly. “Just because we live in a small city doesn’t mean we have to keep our business small. It is entirely possible to be a global business in the Rogue Valley.”



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