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*by* LAURA PRITCHETT

# Redesigning Rwanda

A Colorado firm's reconstruction plans for the troubled country.



**BUILDING BLOCKS** Outside the walls of Kigali, Rwanda's capital, in 2005. Below: OZ's plans for the city's future.

**Of all the things** that an African president might be impressed with during a visit to Colorado, the Denver Tech Center would probably be on the bottom of the list. Oddly enough, though, when Rwandan President Paul Kagame toured Colorado urban centers during a 2003 trip to the Aspen Institute, the president liked the DTC, as well as Boulder's Pearl Street Mall. At the time, Kagame was looking for a solution to his country's poor infrastructure, which had been decimated by a 1994 genocide, and so he sought out the center's designer, Denver's OZ Architecture, and its director of planning and urban design, Carl Worthington. Kagame had a simple, yet enormous pitch for OZ: Come to Rwanda and shape the future of our cities.

The urban design firm accepted the challenge, and now, five years later, OZ is finishing up its master plans for Kigali,



the capital city of 1 million people; Rwamagana, a city of 15,000; and a new international airport and hospital. OZ's designs include mixed-use residential neighborhoods, business districts, and transportation systems, all with an eye toward preserving land for open space, forests, and ecotourism. Construction, which is being funded by the Rwandan government, the World Bank, and private investments, will take at least 10 years.

The model for many of the plans is none other than Boulder's blend of mixed-use living and open space. "Boulder has been my little laboratory of experimenting with urban-design things all these years," says Worthington. This time, though, the goal is far loftier than the Pearl Street Mall. "It's not just master planning a vision for a capital city," he says. "It's literally writing the script for an entire country." —PETRA SPIESS



## THE IDEA Move over, laces



**Gary Hammerslag** turned heads in the shoe world in 2001 when he replaced

the shoelaces on snowboard boots with a ratcheting dial and a metal cable. Quickly, users found that with the cable and dial—which Hammerslag dubbed Boa Technology—their boots fit better and never came undone. Now, seven years later, you can find the Boa on hiking boots, trail runners, cycling shoes, even wakeboarding boots. We asked Hammerslag how his Colorado-based company impacts outdoor sports.

### What's wrong with shoelaces?

Lots of things, especially in high-performance applications. Shoelaces stretch when they get wet. They come untied. And to tighten or loosen the fit, you have to untie the bow and start over. Boa gives athletes a performance fit they can micro-adjust on the fly.

### How did you get the idea for the cable and dial?

I started snowboarding in 1997. That same year, both my kids started playing ice hockey, and they were young at the time and had trouble tying their own skates. I had difficulty getting the fit I liked on a snowboard boot, not to mention the hassle.

### Is Boa really that revolutionary?

We're passionate about the sports we do and about product design. But honestly, we're just a replacement for shoelaces, not a cure for cancer. We're improving people's lives in a very small way.

—KELLY BASTONE