

Builder/Architect

Feature
**Appeal: Getting
Buyers to Get Out
of Their Cars**

**Metro Millwork
Commits to Its
Customers**

Orfield Design & Construction, Inc.

Orfield Designs With the Big Picture in Mind

It is not very often that I have the pleasure of working with a female-owned company like Orfield Design & Construction. Most of the cover stories that we've written about and most of my meetings on a daily basis are with male home builders, remodelers and architects. *Not that there's anything wrong with that.* However, it was a nice breath of fresh air to hear a woman's perspective on design and corporate strategy. As you would expect, Orfield Design & Construction pays a great deal of attention to their presentation when meeting with clients. They listen to their client's needs and lifestyle habits during the initial consultation. Their architectural renderings are even modified to include design details that would normally be left out in the planning stage. Orfield Design & Construction doesn't pretend to be the least expensive remodeling company in the Twin Cities, but with over 30 years of experience in the industry, they can quickly distinguish themselves from other, less experienced companies. Orfield Design & Construction's creative design and strong relationships will ensure that they are here for many years to come.

Also in this issue, Metro Millwork is our featured local company. This 25-year-old business supplies windows and interior and exterior doors to the residential and commercial building industries. Many companies like to talk about service. The word is so often overused in the marketplace that I think the meaning gets lost. Metro Millwork goes beyond the cliché and actually defines service. The entire company is focused on service. From the front end to the back end, everyone at Metro Millwork is focused on providing its clients with exceptional service. Please make sure to read this article on this leader in the industry.

Next month, since the days are getting shorter and darker, it is time to draw our attention to the interior, and October is our interior details issue. The following products will be showcased: lighting, ceiling fans, fireplaces, wall treatments, flooring, staircases, elevators and trim.

Until next time.

Sincerely,

Katie Randall
Publisher



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Contact Information

Send press releases and all other information related to this local edition of Builder/Architect c/o: 8362 Tamarack Village Suite 119-129 Woodbury, MN 55125

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Orfield Design & Construction, Inc.

Orfield Designs With the Big Picture in Mind

By Russ J. Stacey

As a female-owned business in a male-dominated field, Orfield Design & Construction, Inc. has faced its share of challenges and prejudices, but they've learned to turn them to their advantage. "It's a selling point for us. Clients tell us we're empathetic and that we watch out for the aesthetic design," says Laura Orfield-Skrivseth. "After doing it for a number of years, working twice as hard to earn that respect and knowing what I'm talking about, people aren't so surprised anymore."

"I think it's interesting that all the television programs in the last 10 or 15 years have really brought the public forward in how homeowners view women in makeovers for their homes. I think it has helped the industry and what we do as a service-oriented construction company," Ron Orfield says.

In its 30-year history of serving the Twin Cities area, Orfield Design & Construction has carved out an enviable reputation for creative design, integrity, communication and excellence. The family-owned, award-winning design-build firm provides complete architectural and design services for residential remodeling projects of every shape and size.

Kitchen/living room remodel



PHOTO BY ADRIENNE PAGE

Ron worked with his father in construction in St. Paul before graduating from the University of Minnesota with his architecture degree. He soon headed off to England, designing at architectural firms for over six years. After returning to Minnesota, he went into business with his brother, Henry, and they incorporated Orfield Design & Construction in 1978, at first remodeling historical properties in the St. Paul and Country Club areas before expanding to the Twin Cities and surrounding areas. Laura partnered with her father, Ron, in 2000, after Henry's retirement. Ron, the President, and Laura, the Vice President, co-own the company.

"Being a woman who is also a mother and a wife gives me a perspective that I can relate to clients," Laura says. "For instance, if they ask how intrusive construction will be on their lives, I can tell them when they get up to make the baby's bottle they won't have the kitchen to make it in, but they can make it here or there. I know what it's like to take the kids to school, to work full time, to do the food shopping and to deal with remodeling a house. It's something they respect and relate to. They know that I did it and I understand the struggle."

"They feel very comfortable asking us questions. They know that we care, that we're going to get them answers and work with them," says Amy Brogan, full-time architectural drafter and designer.

The core of the firm's designer services goes back years. "What I learned working in England is that the culture there is much smaller architecturally — smaller in detail and in space than the American culture," Ron says. "And it really taught me to take care of the details in moldings, cabinetry, bases, everything. When we went ahead with this company, we saw that it

was important to bring not only that sense of detail, but also the needs of the client and the quality of service." It's that attention to every facet of the process that has earned Orfield Design & Construction recognition and accolades from their peers.

Client relationships are special to Orfield Design & Construction's experienced, professional team. Everything they do relates to how it best suits their clients' needs and best captures their vision of the project. Sometimes that includes educating them on features they've overlooked or failed to recognize. True to human nature, customers frequently design to their immediate needs rather than the long term. This is a situation Orfield Design & Construction encounters often and the "remodeling for kids" concept has become an integral focus of the firm.

"They may say that this is what they need right now. We respond that, yes, we do need to provide for that. But your kids are going to grow up, so you should allow for this, this and this. We always give them the bigger perspective of where they're going with their project," Ron says. "Clients will have really little children or they're remodeling because their baby hasn't been born yet," Laura says. "I'll come in and say, 'Listen, my boys are 8 and 9 and I know right now you might never envision having to take a toddler's fingers away from a certain appliance. But I really would not put the microwave down there because this is what you're going to encounter. This is what my kids did.' Or I'll tell them they're not envisioning hockey lessons and baseball, but they're going to need more space in this closet or in the mudroom. Those storage amenities are going to be important. They're so appreciative of that extra thought, saying things like, 'Wow, I didn't think about that. Let's incorporate that into the design.'"

At the other end of the spectrum is aging in place, which



Bath remodel

Orfield Design & Construction also excels at. For instance, if a client can still get around and decides they want to move to one-level living, the company will take it to the next step and take up other issues. Having the kitchen and bedrooms on one level is great, but the designers can point out important details like thresholds and sills. How will the client get over those with a wheelchair or walker or cane? They'll also suggest ideas like putting grab bars in bathrooms and moving the laundry room to the same level.

"We're very open and realistic from the very first time we meet with customers about timelines and rough estimations

PHOTO BY ADRIENNE PAGE



Exterior remodel



Bath remodel

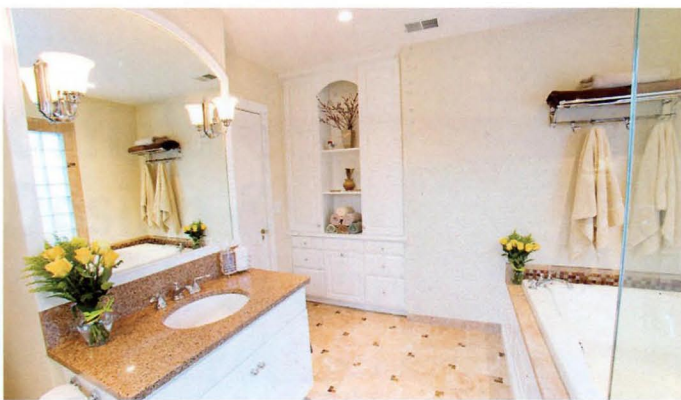
for how long a project will take because that's the big concern that people have. It goes back to educating the client," says Brogan.

The Saint Louis Park company's extensive list of services includes design planning, construction blueprints, interior and exterior remodeling, and additions. Specifications and pricing are extensive and detailed, leaving nothing to conjecture and putting clients in command of the entire scope of the job, knowing exactly how their money is being spent. They also walk clients through each stage of the project, from the blueprints to the final interior design, all the while patiently answering questions, listening to suggestions and collaborating on details.

"We realized years ago that the more information you give clients, not only is there less chance of miscommunication and misunderstanding, it helps educate them. We've stuck with that all these years. It's another reason people select us, saying that they get generic one-page contracts from our competitors while getting 10 to 25 pages from us," Laura says.

A unique, seldom-seen trait these days that Orfield

PHOTO BY JOY WATSON



Bath remodel

Design & Construction employs hand-drawn sketches, eschewing CAD programs. They've found that the practice endears customers, connecting them to the project. Drawing in pencil adds a personal, creative touch that counteracts the perceived sterility of CAD's straight, square, hard lines. There is also the immediacy and flexibility. Sitting in a client's kitchen reviewing and tweaking drawings, sketching out a few lines right there to highlight features or changes is much quicker than returning to the office, doing it on a computer and returning the drawings to the client, often leading to quicker decision

Kitchen remodel



PHOTO BY BOB FRENCH



Kitchen/dining remodel

PHOTO BY JOY WATSON



Kitchen remodel



Kitchen remodel

making. Easily drawing the idiosyncrasies of small shapes, curves, details and altering them immediately, is another big advantage.

“Design and customer service: those are really the joys for us,” Ron says. “Giving a person what they want in a very pleasing and efficient manner. The care is there, the focus on the details is there. Laura and Amy are extremely knowledgeable in all of these fields and they bring that with them, but it’s with a gentle kind of touch. People see that right away and identify with it.” ■

Kitchen remodel



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