

Builder/Architect



Holliday Architects
A Passion for Creative Excellence

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By Jessica Klarp

“A significant factor in our success is that we love what we do,” said John DiNisio, Director of Holliday Architects’ residential division. “We are passionate about good design.”

James Holliday, who started the Medford-based architectural firm in 1990, agrees with DiNisio. “We have built a talented team of people who complement one another’s skills. We pride ourselves on the design and technical ends, but also on following through by creating good, clear drawings that can easily be followed in the field.”

That client-focused philosophy has kept Holliday Architects

busy with a wide range of commercial and residential projects throughout the region. From new construction, institutional upgrades and urban renewal projects to custom home design and products for production builders, Holliday Architects has won the trust of clients — and a host of referrals — by focusing on a commitment to service and a consideration for cost.

Despite a long, impressive list of big name clients, DiNisio laughed when he said that “Holliday Architects is the best kept secret in town,” because of the subtle way the company goes about methodically completing projects in a timely





Paparone Homes of New Jersey and larger production builders like Lennar and J.S. Hovnanian & Sons among his clients. DiNisio divides his time almost equally between custom home design and design for production builders.

“I think one of the things that draws custom clients to us is our level of interest,” DiNisio said. “I allow people to talk and get to know them. I’m patient and a good listener. Once they are comfortable, we get to the heart of the project. It is fun for everyone and the client feels like he is participating in the job because he is. And what comes out is a project that is exactly the way he imagined it. It is very rewarding.”

With developers, DiNisio points out that communication is the key in determining their needs for a project, and the attentiveness to making certain someone is always there to answer the phone, return calls, address questions and resolve any issues that arise. It’s Customer Service 101, and Holliday Architects gets an A+.

DiNisio says that while the client’s taste often dictates materials and aesthetics, recent residential projects have scaled back from the opulence of the ’90s and are returning to warmer earth tones and understated elegance. “We

manner, responding to clients’ needs, and solving problems without resistance.

Historically, the company focused on small- to medium-sized projects, primarily in the commercial realm — Holliday’s area of expertise. But when DiNisio joined the firm a year ago, the organization ventured in a new direction to accommodate his expertise in residential design. DiNisio brought with him a repertoire of skills in addition to an established client base. Over the past 30 years he has worked on residential design projects throughout the region and now counts local builders like Bob Meyer Communities, regional producers such as

are also starting to see cost considerations affect the design for production builders,” he said. “Three- to four-story condominiums over parking means a smaller footprint on land,



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creating greater affordability in a region contending with increased density.”

Considering the volume and variety of work produced and services provided, the company is relatively small. Eight full-time employees offer innovative design solutions to a full range of projects. Jim Holliday proudly points out that each member of the staff makes a unique contribution to the well-oiled creative machine, from John Christensen, who lends his

skills as a designer and expert renderer of hand-drawn elevations, to Craig Masterson, who provides technical oversight and establishes systems and policies for the staff. “It’s like a family of people who love what they do,” he said.

Urban Promise is one of Holliday’s favorite projects. A 12,000-square-foot alternative school building in the Camden area designed for after school and summer programs, Urban Promise is the first step in a proposed urban renewal for the



area. “We built this one from the ground up,” Holliday explained. “And while the design was pretty straightforward, we intended it to be understated to fit in with the surrounding community. At the same time, we were charged with creating a building that would enhance the community’s aesthetic value. We wanted to design something that the community could be proud of and that would encourage the regeneration of the buildings around it.”

In the next five years Holliday predicts growth in the institutional and commercial sectors. Recently, the company





has worked on an increasing number of renovations and additions to existing properties. He attributes this increase in renovation undertakings to the clients' perception that it is less expensive (which it typically isn't) and due to the scarcity of land. "Our motto when it comes to renovation is that we want to make sure it doesn't look like an addition," he said. "It is very important that it all flows and ties together."

In contrast with some projects, the intent is to make the building stand out, as with their addition to a local tavern. Holliday Architects solved the client's problem by giving the nondescript building a much-needed facelift inside and out. Clients appreciate that the company works closely with local municipalities and building departments to provide planning and documentation for their designs. As a result, recommendations flow from past projects and building contractors.

DiNisio says that Holliday is more technically oriented, while he is more design-oriented, and together they offer clients the full package of expertise. Holliday points out that their company may not be unique, but their passion for creative excellence has helped them retain diverse clients. "It's the marriage of the design to the technical," Holliday said. "We strive to design something that is not only beautiful in



The Holliday Architects' team

presentation, but because of the technical aspects, the design can also actually be built from an economic standpoint, and in a timely manner with minimal changes during construction. That's what we do and do well."

For more information on Holliday Architects, phone (609) 953-5373. ■