

# Design Magic

HOW AN INTERIOR DESIGN FIRM HAS CREATED TRANSFORMING  
NEW LOOKS IN SOME FAMILIAR LOCAL BUILDINGS. BY CAYLA STANLEY

YOU MAY NOT HAVE known it, but you've hardly traveled a half-mile through Collier County without passing the work of Wegman Design Group.

The commercial interior design firm's "creative and intelligent design" lies behind the walls of some of our most well-known buildings and defines numerous others as secret standouts. You'll find its stamp on just about every industry, spanning restaurants, retail stores, corporate offices, health care centers, banks, condominiums and even the nonprofit sector.

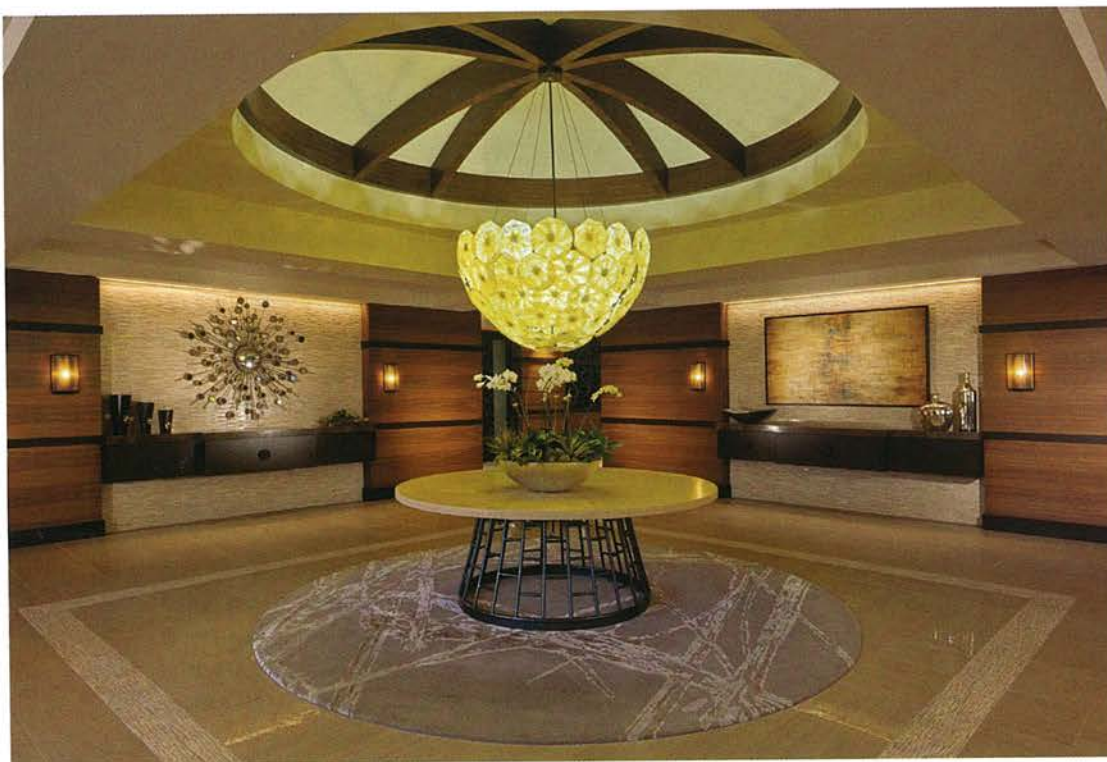
Led by the ever-inventive Lori Wegman, the team of nine have carved out such prominence by delivering

## WYNDEMERE COUNTRY CLUB

Though the firm made sweeping changes with the addition of 10,000 square feet, this single hallway demonstrates its proficiency for thorough transformation within the exact same parameters. Clean lines and a see-through screen now draw you into the drastically re-configured dining area beyond.

Restrooms and service spaces were pushed to the interior, improving overcomplicated food runs and allowing diners to take advantage of the views. A sea of tables was improved by adding booth and lounge seating and a bar that now faces added windows instead of a wall. The restaurant's spoke-and-wheel ceiling allowed only excessive, unsightly track lights, so the structure was partially filled, with acoustic-improving material, to support superior lighting.





A domed ceiling and congruent light fixture maintain openness while replacing a leaky, overly hot skylight. The total overhaul of the site, meant to redefine the country-club vibe, traded tartan carpeting and drab colors (think forest green and dusty rose) for a more energized palette and a seamless transition between indoor and outdoor spaces.

designs that are equal parts striking aesthetics and thoughtful function. Its strategic approach elevates a blank slate or bland, inefficient space to a beautiful yet wieldy experience.

"It's not so much about, 'Is it traditional, is it Mediterranean'—it's, 'What is this client out to do, and how can we make their message come across in the environment?'" Wegman says. "It could be about changing perceptions; it could be about calming people down; it could be about functioning better for highly technical employees."

For the headquarters of Arthrex, the group turned 8,000 square feet of warehouse space with fluorescent lighting and Costco card tables into an adjustable facility worthy of training world-class physicians by day and entertaining them by night. For Covenant Church of Naples, they created a dynamic sanctuary

with state-of-the-art flexibility in seating, lighting, visuals and sound.

They crafted South Regional Library to be open, inviting and organized using sustainable materials. They provided children visiting the NCH North Naples Hospital pediatric care unit an engaging, comforting environment with the "SeaCAREium," and transformed the blond wood, pallid upholstery and unnatural barriers of the hospital's downtown campus lobby into a streamlined sequence easy to navigate in times of stress.

Clients approach the award-winning firm not for a signature look, but for a style all their own: a unique solution informed by them and only them. Hertz, Algenol, Bigham Jewelers, Scanlon Lexus—no order is too tall. The projects shown here—Wyndemere Country Club, the NCH Downtown Naples Hospital Gulfview



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Suites and The Center for Healthy Living at Moorings Park—surely demonstrate that smart design.

And the group does a lot of work to get there. A good portion of projects involve heavy research, sometimes demanding functionality studies or focus groups, and the field inherently poses extra challenges.

Instead of working to please homeowners, maybe a couple or a small family, a commercial designer works with committees, management teams or business segments—complete with a whole lot of documentation—to please many. The





## NCH GULFVIEW SUITES

Hospital meets hotel in these redesigned VIP suites. A richly paneled headwall still achieves full functionality, and lighting can be ambient or medical grade. Each room's unique (and limiting) dimension required precise customization, from a concealed cart for dirty linens to corner-hugging card and plant shelves. All components of the chair (which folds into a bed) and recliner can be dismantled and cleaned separately.

To keep germs from spreading, all materials are completely impervious: nonporous Crypton upholstery, chip-resistant faux wood, decorative wall and slip-proof shower tiles, quartz counters and mold-resistant grouting, and vinyl solar shades.





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—WEGMAN

space must be fresh, yet universal. Textiles must often be more durable, and interdisciplinary coordination is crucial to success: Complex projects can involve collaboration with architects; engineers; builders; acoustical, lighting and media consultants; and industry experts.

Furthermore, installations and décor must adhere to fire and building codes and accommodate persons with disabilities.

So why choose this path over the relative glamour of residential design?

"If ever you think you've had enough of this type of work or that type of work, there's another project around the corner that's completely different," Wegman says. She adds, "I enjoy seeing what we can learn from one thing and have it be a springboard for something else."

The extensive variety compels you to be very well educated and "have a lot in your paint box," Wegman says, but for someone who gets bored easily, it's a welcome problem to solve.

Always one with a flair for both arts and math, Wegman knew early on what her career would be. She put in time for three major firms before even graduating from college, worked eight years in her hometown of Cincinnati, and then went on to distinguished corporations

ranging from a 1,600-store retailer to an entertainment conglomerate.

Despite a decorated career, she decided it was too early to retire. Wegman and her husband moved to their longtime vacation spot, and in 2001 she began Wegman

Design Group without knowing a single professional in town.

"We always try to come up with something that's a big idea, that's memorable and distinctive," she says. "Because otherwise, why bother?"



## THE CENTER FOR HEALTHY LIVING

A stained aluminum "water wall" unites three floors in this one-of-a-kind senior wellness center. The firm worked two years prior to construction to design a continuum of physical, emotional and spiritual care

among a medical clinic, spa, salon, café, theater, indoor and rooftop gardens, exercise areas and Max-Wellness retail store.

Tactical efforts are as discreet as patterned carpet tiles—a spill warrants only the quick swap of a square—and as integral as plants, partitions and space-defining colored terrazzo flooring

that facilitate synergy in place of walls. A gallery doubles as a pre-function or intermission space for the state-of-the-art education and entertainment theater, hallways are curved to encourage walking, and even the progression of fitness rooms is such that you work your way up from one goal to the next.