

NOVEMBER 2009

AENA was approached by *North American Design Magazine* to be featured in a project focus article highlighting our innovative design method. The following re-print of the article was published in the fall 2009 issue of the magazine.

Authentic Innovation

AENA Corporation's full spectrum of services gives it a competitive advantage.
By Genevieve Diesing

To many, 'innovation' may be just a design industry buzzword, but to AEN Architects Principal Alex Nussbaumer, the concept can be weighty. "You can't truly innovate if you don't understand the entire process of building and design," he says. "Only by understanding the process can you efficiently propose innovative design solutions."

In Nussbaumer's estimation, AENA truly understands this. The company has a grip on both the intricacies of architectural design and the technical complexities of structural and mechanical design, giving it a holistic view of the entire design process.

This view distinguishes it as a genuine innovator in its field, Nussbaumer explains. Now in its 15th year, this New York City based architecture, interiors, planning, design/build firm says the synergy that occurs every day in its offices is a direct result of having a full spectrum of specialties in-house, an asset it says most of the competition can't measure up to. This empowers AENA personnel to continuously make the most effective and creative design and technical decisions on clients' behalf, he notes.

"There is a lot of cross-feeding of information [between staff] because we do design/build and we have engineers right in the same studio with architects," Nussbaumer notes. "It's a very steady and productive transfer of information on projects. It makes it easier to implement new types of design solutions because you have the expertise in-house to really understand and execute new and innovative building strategies."

AENA is working on a condominium project called Condos on 126th Street in Harlem, N.Y., and another condominium project called Garvey Park Condos, on 120th St. They are designed to LEED gold and silver levels, respectively. "We've been able to employ some sustainable strategies in terms of HVAC systems, gray-water systems, solar panels and innovative use of heating systems," Nussbaumer says. "Because of our design process, and the level of communication among the design disciplines and trades, we can implement sustainable concepts without adding as much cost to the project compared with other firms."

Practical design and cost-control are critical parts of AENA's design philosophy, and it achieves them through effective communication. "When we do design/build, we can have the tradesmen that are going to execute the project in the room when we are doing the design," he explains. "Because we're using an integrated approach, we can cut out a certain level of documentation and a certain amount of time.

"That ability to quickly understand design from the implementation side and conquer problems and hurdles – it's a huge benefit," Nussbaumer adds.

Permanent Niche

AENA's staff is its biggest asset, so it takes time to train it properly. "Once we decide on hiring someone, we pair them with a senior project manager so they understand the ways that we work," Nussbaumer says. "Once they are trained in the ways we do design, they are allowed to manage their own project. We do place an emphasis on keeping everyone on track to manage and design their own projects."

**aena**

144 East 44th Street
New York, NY 10017

t 212 338 0111
info@aenac.com
www.aenac.com

37-24 24th Street
Long Island City
11101

Architecture
Planning
Interior Design
Design Build