



CELEBRATING
55 YEARS

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**2025
Architects**

Featured

Women-Owned

Businesses:

Gienapp

September 26, 2025 - Spotlights



GIENAPP ARCHITECTS

Begin Here. Finish Well.

Imelda Barnhurst
Owner, Architect, Principal-in-Charge
Gienapp Architects

What skills or qualities do you believe are essential for success at your firm? Success at my firm depends on the ability to combine creativity with careful execution. While strong design ideas are important, just as critical are clear communication and a high level of organization. Our teams often balance multiple projects at once, making these skills essential. Every project, regardless of its scale, deserves the same level of attention, thoughtful planning, and respect for detail. Our work requires staff to anticipate challenges, coordinate different disciplines, and remain adaptable as projects evolve. By approaching design with both imagination and precision, we are able to create spaces that are not only beautiful, but also highly functional, reflecting the quality and reliability that clients expect from us.

What advice would you offer to women who aspire to lead and succeed in your field? My advice to women who aspire to lead and succeed in this field is to seek out connections with those who have gone before you. Early in my career, I was fortunate to learn from women who shared their experiences, offered guidance, and pointed me toward valuable resources. Their examples showed me not only how to navigate challenges, but also how to approach opportunities with confidence. I would also encourage women to stay committed to the work if they love it – this field is demanding, but persistence pays off. And if the environment you're in doesn't feel like the right fit, don't hesitate to explore other firms. Each practice has its own culture and approach, and finding the right one can make all the difference.

How do you see technology and innovation shaping the future of your industry? Technology and innovation are transforming both the way we design and the way our buildings perform. Advances in construction technology – such as improved energy efficiency, smart building systems, and more sustainable materials – are allowing us to create spaces that are not only functional but also responsive to the environment and the people who use them.

On the design side, new tools are reshaping how we work day to day. Drones and 3D scanning make it faster and easier to document existing conditions with accuracy, while emerging applications of AI are showing potential for testing different layouts and visualizing design options. These tools expand our ability to explore creative solutions while delivering more precise and efficient results. I'm excited to see what will come over the next 10 years.

What role does collaboration play in building strong client and colleague relationships? Collaboration is at the heart of building strong relationships with both clients and colleagues. Design and construction are rarely linear – there are periods of pausing and moments when decisions need to be made quickly. When everyone is in regular communication, it becomes much easier to respond effectively and keep projects moving forward.

For that reason, we prioritize keeping clients, colleagues, consultants, and contractors up to date

and aligned at every stage. This shared understanding not only helps us address issues in a timely manner but also builds trust, reduces potential setbacks, and ensures final results reflect the collective effort of all members of the project.

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