

Our team at Cornerstone set the goal of demonstrating that building green was practical, achievable, and relevant to our community.

Interior designer Suzie Hall on creating her own green standards and keeping her detail-oriented designs from looking “recycled”

When Suzie Hall was a little girl, she wanted to be a teacher and a coach. Today, as the owner of Cornerstone Design, an interior design firm in Boise, Idaho, Hall has become a teacher in her own right, helping local businesses, homeowners, and even students to understand how attainable sustainable interior design can really be—and how green can be gorgeous.

My husband and I purchased the existing shell of a building that had been vacant for two years and transformed it into our office. Our team at Cornerstone set the goal of designing a LEED-CI Gold space to demonstrate that building green was practical, achievable, and relevant to our community.

We start by looking at the lifespan of the space and base our overall design plan on this information. We recently completed a tenant-improvement project where they know they will only be there for three more years and then will move into a larger space. So we designed all of the new cabinetry (casework) that sits on the floor, including the reception station, to be modular. This way they can take it with them when they move. If the client is planning to stay somewhere forever, then we will recommend materials that have a very long life cycle. The initial investment is usually higher, but there won't be replacement costs down the road to deal with.

UP CLOSE & PERSONAL

What was your first job?

I worked at an Arby's fast food restaurant and got to wear brown polyester!

If you weren't a designer, what would be your alternate career?

A photographer.

What inspires you?

Music, quiet, traveling, and massages.

Describe yourself in three words.

Intuitive, confident, and persistent.

What is your hidden talent?

I'm an 11 handicap golfer.

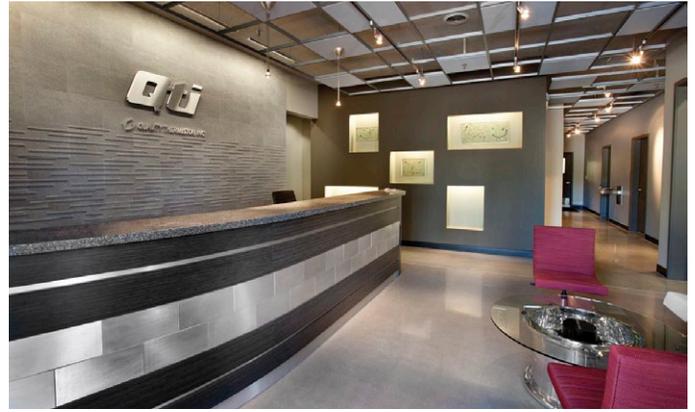


Details are often overlooked: Incorporating integrated space for a recycling container at each workstation. Designing attractive recycling containers that match the interior design palette. Specifying low-flow/low-flush faucets, showerheads, and toilets at all locations. Providing adjustable LED task lighting at each workstation. Healthy indoor air quality is imperative. A good balance of natural daylight with energy-efficient, controllable lighting is also key.

I think a lot of sustainable interior projects out there look “recycled.”

When firms first started designing green interiors, I think that the designers thought they needed to “look” sustainable. Now we're seeing a lot more diversity in the use and application of materials. Our firm likes to use the term “green and gorgeous.” The Banner Bank tenant-improvement project was the first LEED-CI Gold-certified project in the State of Idaho. I was the interior designer and also the LEED administrator. The tenant wasn't too concerned about the LEED portion of the project, they just wanted to make sure that it looked great. The building owner wanted both. It was a challenging balancing act throughout the project and resulted in a notable green space.

We often set our own standards. The size of the Intermountain Medical Imaging renovation project (approximately 2,000 square feet) didn't motivate the owner to pursue LEED certification, but they are very serious about sustainability efforts. It was the second project our firm has



ABOVE, LEFT: This custom conference table base is a reclaimed airplane wing, a nod to the client's aerospace industry.
 ABOVE, RIGHT: The reception area at the Quality Thermistor in Boise, Idaho, showcases recycled aluminum tile on a radius on the reception station and energy-efficient accent lighting.
 BOTTOM, LEFT: The reception area and lobby of the Veterans Administration Regional Office building features locally quarried Idaho travertine and FSC-certified walnut

done where we have written our own "green" program and set forth targets at the beginning of the project. One of our goals on this project was to divert at least 50 percent of construction waste from the landfill.

The client is paying approximately \$1 per yard to send the existing carpet to a reclamation program that is close by. We used construction and finish materials that had at least 20-percent recycled content; only GreenGuard- and CRI Green Label Plus-certified materials, including fabrics; products in the furniture package that had a total of at least 30-percent recycled content, met GreenGuard certification, were FSC-certified, and came from vendors with a good written sustainability program in place. We used 3form's Varia Ting Ting Eco Resin as the theme material throughout the project to demonstrate that sustainability can be beautiful and reused as many materials as possible, including a section of carpet and the structure of the registration area station.

We are still in the design phase of a Spokane Air Force base, which is a three-building project, two of which are targeting a LEED-NC Silver rating. Our design is a minimalistic approach that utilizes a minimum of raw resources. We have taken care to select materials that have a long life span, are easy to maintain, and will withstand a high level of use. We are reusing furniture, equipment, and appliances as much as possible. We are specifying cradle-to-cradle workstations that are fully integrated with the cabling requirements of this advanced operation.

—as told to Suchi Rudra

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Tyler Brown LEED AP
 tbrown@dfloors.com
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