



# WALKING THE WALK

THE SMALL BUT MIGHTY (K) WARMAN ARCHITECTURE + DESIGN TAKES ON DESIGN WORK FROM GAS STATIONS TO LUXURY AUTO DEALERSHIPS... AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN

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A LANDMARK KC RESTAURANT GETS A MAJOR FACELIFT, AND CUSTOMERS RESPOND

**COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT ROUNDUP**  
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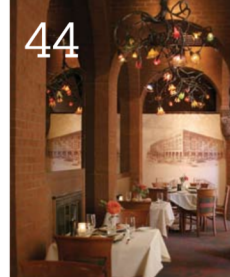
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The small but mighty (k) WARMAN Architecture + Design has worked on a rich diversity of projects, demonstrating flexibility and creativity in its range of offerings.  
BY NANCY MCKEE  
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## WALKING THE WALK

words NANCY H. MCKEE photography AUSTIN WALSH

**1.1:** (left to right) Tiffany Timmons, Jason Ayers, Jenney Sanders, Kathleen Warman, Chad Trealout and Jim Ellis

**On the Cover:** (left to right) Ellis, Sanders, Ayers, Timmons, Trealout and Warman

Kathleen Warman, principal and sole owner of Kansas City-based **(k) WARMAN Architecture + Design**, says she feels strongly about the role of architects in commercial construction design. "To walk the walk, architects are either innately or by education supposed to be problem solvers, caretakers of the environment, artists, visionaries, protectors of life and limb, public speakers and, on occasion, experts in insanely complicated, three-dimensional computer software," she says. At Warman Design, she and her associates strive to live up to these demanding imperatives.

### HISTORY

This small architectural firm traces its roots to the early 1960s, when the architecture firm that would eventually become **Wickham Jarvi and Warman Architects** was first established by Lawrence Wickham, the sole owner. Kathleen Warman and Michael Jarvi both joined the firm in the early 1980s and acquired the company in 1989.

"When Mike Jarvi and I began this journey," Warman says, "we sat across from one another at drafting tables and hoped that the high architectural ideals we were taught in the school of architecture at the **University of Kansas** would translate into a slew of new project

contracts." When the phones remained silent, they embarked upon a crash course in marketing professional services and started landing a few projects. Over the next 10 years, their workload grew to include clients like **ConocoPhillips**, **Texaco** and **Shell** as part of the firm's retail petroleum and convenience store initiatives. Public projects and work for the **North Kansas City School District** also followed, as did the solidification of a long-standing relationship with national developer **KZ Holdings**.

Jarvi's death in 2000 left Kathleen Warman as sole owner of the firm. "Walking the walk suddenly took on a whole new meaning," Warman says. While she wanted the firm to be judged on its merit, not its gender, she decided to pursue the Women Business Enterprise (WBE) certification, which Warman wryly describes as an affirmation that she is both a woman and a viable part of the business. The process required a great deal of paperwork and an extremely thorough review of business practices by the human resources department of the **City of Kansas City, Missouri**—"everything short of a pat down," Warman says. Despite Warman's cynicism, the WBE certification has borne fruit by providing the firm with project opportunities, including the renovation of the Seville Center on the Country Club Plaza and the **Schletterbahn** Vacation Village project in Wyandotte County, Kansas.

### SCOPE OF PROJECTS

While the **WARMAN Design Group** remains small, its scope of projects has mushroomed. Warman, a licensed architect, remains principal of the firm and is assisted by LEED-certified Jason Ayers and four other employees. "We are small but mighty," says Ayers, who also serves as marketing and creative director. He adds that the firm has "projects in 23 different states across the country, along with a significant local presence in North Kansas City."

Prototype design and management accounts for 10 to 15 percent of Warman Design Group's portfolio. (Several ConocoPhillips, Shell and Texaco gas stations and convenience stores in the region were designed by (k) WARMAN) Other projects include public buildings like the renovation of Gladstone City Hall, the North Kansas City Fire Station No.1 and many projects for the North Kansas City School District. Banks, retail stores, restaurants, animal hospitals and industrial warehouses all demonstrate the firm's flexibility and engagement with the community.

**Aristocrat Motors**, a destination luxury auto dealership in Merriam, Kansas, selected (k) WARMAN Architecture + Design as the architect for its 15,000-square-foot addition in fall 2004. The sales and showroom facility showcases the dealerships **Jaguar** and **Land Rover** automobiles, with a glass curtain wall providing natural light and a dramatic, almost-two-story, freestanding mural of a jaguar (the animal). In addition, the building sports a boutique that offers luxury car owners a variety of themed memorabilia, an Internet bar and a cappuccino bar. The lower level houses additional administrative offices and conference facilities.

**Roses by the Village Gardens**, an 8,000-square-foot retail, gift and flower shop located off of Interstate Highway 70 in Blue Springs, Missouri, was designed by (k) WARMAN Architecture + Design to provide a new home for the florist. The owner's business (formerly focused simply on roses) has evolved to include a wide variety of floral services, tropical plants, greeting cards and candles. It also provides wedding consultations. The design of the building incorporates a village look with the appeal of store fronts ideal for window shopping. A new, sit-down restaurant is planned for the remainder of the development.

Part of downtown Kansas City's renaissance, **Seven**, a restaurant located at Seventh and Walnut streets in the historic **Western Union** Building, was completed in the spring of 2007. (k) WARMAN architects worked to transform the large, two-story space into a series of smaller areas and levels, creating an atmosphere of private dining without sacrificing the grandeur

of the old hall. The 4,200-square-foot main floor was designed to preserve the open ductwork and wooden beams that line the ceiling, and there is a mezzanine-level, 647-square-foot dining area overlooking the larger restaurant area below.

A somewhat unusual specialty of (k) WARMAN Architecture + Design is the creation of animal hospitals. The firm has completed six animal hospital facilities throughout the Midwest, including the **Barry Road Animal Hospital** on Northwest Barry Road in Kansas City. A number of critical areas are involved in the design and programming of an animal hospital. In addition to sensitive spatial relationships, issues such as internal traffic flow, noise abatement and material selection need to be considered. Both veterinarians and animal owners have been pleased with the architectural firm's design.

### LOOKING AHEAD

As for prognostications for the immediate future, Warman says that she is an eternal optimist. In the last quarter of 2008, client demand slowed somewhat, but she ascribes much of the slowdown to seasonal factors. "We've seen projects that have kicked off since the presidential election," she notes, "and I think things will pick up even more in 2009." Ayers adds that the firm is small but diverse and that it has several niches such as prototype design, and small retail and school projects.

"Another factor to consider is that we generally don't have these huge pendulum swings here in the Midwest," Warman says. Something else she considers her firm fortunate for is the reasonable group of developers, business owners and public entities that it has been able to work with throughout the years. "We've found that the relationships that are the most successful are the ones where we hold tight to our commitment to walk the walk and provide ... clients with the problem-solving, creative and safe building designs that they need," she says. □