

**Released: 10/24/2024**

## **Center Story #4**

### **BRAZEN ARCHITECTURE**

**In this article, Diane delves into the world of architecture by learning more about Brazen Architecture, a firm with a wide array of clients that is located at New Orleans Square.**

On.what.type.of.projects.has.this.very.talented.team.worked?

How.can.community.and.philanthropy.be.folded.into.the.creation.of.new.projects.and.ventures?

What.is.the.first.thing.you.must.do.when.you.visit.Brazen.Architecture?

### **Read on and find out!**

Architect Monica Gresser is the owner of BRAZEN ARCHITECTURE whose office is off the courtyard that is part of New Orleans Square at Commercial Center.

The firm has had an office there since 2021, selecting it because it was a convenient location to their clients and because it is surrounded by community. (BRAZEN was previously located near Naked City from 2014 to 2021.)

Monica says the location works well for her firm, but that many of her original neighbors have left. The building is now owned by the County, and Monica is hopeful that a feasibility study for the future of Commercial Center will result in the rehabilitation of New Orleans Square. In the meantime, her firm is very busy.

Growing up in Texas, Monica was good in math and science. She originally thought she would work in the space industry, but her high school

drafting teacher said her skills would also be applicable to architecture. Eventually, architecture became a passion.

In her younger years, Monica attended the University of Houston. Her major was architecture – her degree took her 10 years - and she financed her schooling through a series of jobs.

During that time, she met and married her husband, Shawn. The couple moved to Baltimore before moving to Las Vegas in 2001, where they found year-round work (Shawn is a Stage Manager for Blue Man Group). The couple have no children, but live with three lively Schipperkes.

Over time, Monica found that she was no longer enamored with large architectural firms, so she started BRAZEN ARCHITECTuRE in 2011 by working out of her home. She designed a beach house in North Carolina and picked up a few small projects based on word of mouth.

Professionally, since she had worked on public-works initiatives earlier in her career, she talked to the Clark County and the City of Las Vegas about engaging her, which ultimately landed her firm several small projects. The County liked her work, including the speed of its completion, and thus decided to increase her contract.

BRAZEN ARCHITECTURE is now on the list of Clark County architects, and Monica has been busy ever since, having done projects not only for the County, but for UNLV, Nevada State University, CSN, Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth and more.

BRAZEN ARCHITECTURE also has two local architectural staff, Designer Keith Tamura and Christian Contreas, who is close to getting his architectural license. Walk into their office and immediately the shoes come off, now a habit with visitors. (Fortunately, this writer had had a pedicure days before her visit so she was glad to show off her painted toes!)

Monica says the firm's work with the community is very important. In fact, during the summer, they close on Fridays so that they can work with Casa de

Luz on summer programs for young people from the surrounding area. They call the program the Neighborhood Kids Design Workshop.

One of those programs asked children to make collages of things they would like to see in their community. “One five-year-old little girl had a tombstone in her collage, and we found out that her parents had both died. So, although she wanted a playground in the neighborhood and to own a neighborhood coffee and art shop, she also wanted to be near her family.” This is heartfelt, important information that BRAZEN staff adopt into their commercial and higher education projects.

Monica continued, “Casa de Luz told us that the kids in the lower income communities don’t have opportunities to see folks other than teachers, police officers, and parents. They like that BRAZEN’s workshops introduce them to architects and other professionals,” which is a kind of inspiration for children. The BRAZEN staff also met two brothers in the summer workshops, one of whom stops by their office to wait for his brother who is being dropped off by the school bus for after-school activities.

Monica’s firm has also helped with challenges in some of the surrounding communities. “We typically work with all kinds of people in our municipalities and can navigate those systems to help our neighbors pretty quickly. For example, once we were told that in the Naked City area (behind the Stratosphere), cars frequently sped down the streets, and we knew the children often played in those streets. But there were no “traffic calming” devices (to slow down oncoming traffic). So, we worked with the City and finally were able to get speed bumps installed on most streets in the neighborhood.”

BRAZEN ARCHITECTURE knows the ropes locally and is busy with planning and zoning projects every day. They occasionally work with design architects and interior designers on larger housing and commercial projects, and frequently work with small businesses on their tenant renovations, as well.

So, even after all of these years in the architectural business, what does Monica still like about her work? “Our work changes every hour. We can’t get bored.”

By: Diane Taylor