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## Paving The Way For A Better Build Environment

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How a group of college friends living in Manayunk paved the way by combining different design disciplines to create a better build environment.

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Every day, hundreds of cars drive past an old mill building at 4001 Main Street seemingly unaware of the work that is happening behind the building's facade. The studio and office spaces inside are home to many creative businesses including one in particular that is changing the building and real estate industry in Philadelphia and beyond — Designblendz.

"The easiest way to break it down and understand is that we are an architecture firm, a 3D visualization and marketing company, and a construction firm in one," CEO Brian Corcodilos explained.

What does that mean exactly? Designblendz helps their clients understand what a project could be with the use of architectural design and 3D renderings all the way through handing off keys at the end of construction.

Bringing architecture, design visualization, and construction together under one roof seems logical, but it's a fairly new concept in the real estate industry that was paved by Designblendz.

"Back in our early roots, we had the idea of blending together different disciplines of design to create a better build environment," Brian said.

"There's no reason you should hire an architect and then hire a construction manager — we are bringing it back to the Renaissance times where the architect was also the builder, it's a one-stop solution."

Designblendz has broken down the entire real estate process into a menu of services for their clients. A client may use Designblendz just for their 3D rendering services or they want the firm to do it all — architectural design, 3D renderings, and construction.

"If you're building in the City of Philadelphia and you don't have a conversation with us at some point, you're missing out on new technology you could use to enhance your real estate process," Brian said.

As for the type of projects Designblendz takes on, it depends on the department. The architecture department works on projects in the tri-state area, the construction team builds throughout the Philadelphia region, while the 3D rendering and marketing team can handle anything from a single family home to much larger projects anywhere in the world. As I interviewed Brian, he noticed Tony Hopkins, director of 3D experience, working with another design team member on a 3D rendering project for a resort in the Bahamas.

"They found us online and wanted help pre-selling and pre-leasing their condos, so we are helping to create the marketing content they can use to sell the condos before construction," he explained. "They might send us a spec sheet with the finishes and how they want the rendering to look. In the end, it looks real to the common eye and you can't tell it's a staged image."

It takes a team comprised of architects, industrial designers, graphic designers, software developers, and construction managers to make this magic happen.

"It's a really cool collective of people that are just trying to create a better build environment and building process to save time and money for our clients," Brian said.

Before starting a project, the first question Designblendz asks their clients is about their budget, so they can take that into account when doing the architecture and design, Brian explained.

"During the architecture and schematics phase, Mike Andrew, our director of construction, will work hand-in-hand with Scott Woodruff, our director of architecture, to give our clients an estimated construction budget based off of the schematic drawings. This gives our clients a very accurate budget for their project and we are able to help the client make better financial decisions," he said.

Like most successful companies, Designblendz comes from humble beginnings.

It was 2011 when three architecture students Brian, Scott, and Tony first came up with the idea to "blend" design disciplines to create a more efficient building environment. They started a blog called Designblendz — yes the name has stuck — to discuss the idea of joining disciplines together. Fast forward two years later when the three graduated from Philadelphia University with bachelor's degrees in architecture and went on to take the workforce by storm.

After graduation, Brian, Scott, and another college friend, Mike, were living in a small Manayunk row home on Ripka Street. At the time, they were all working at firms from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and then coming home to work a night shift from 6 p.m. to 2 a.m..

"We would eat dinner then gather and discuss what we had to get done that night for our clients," Brian recalled.

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