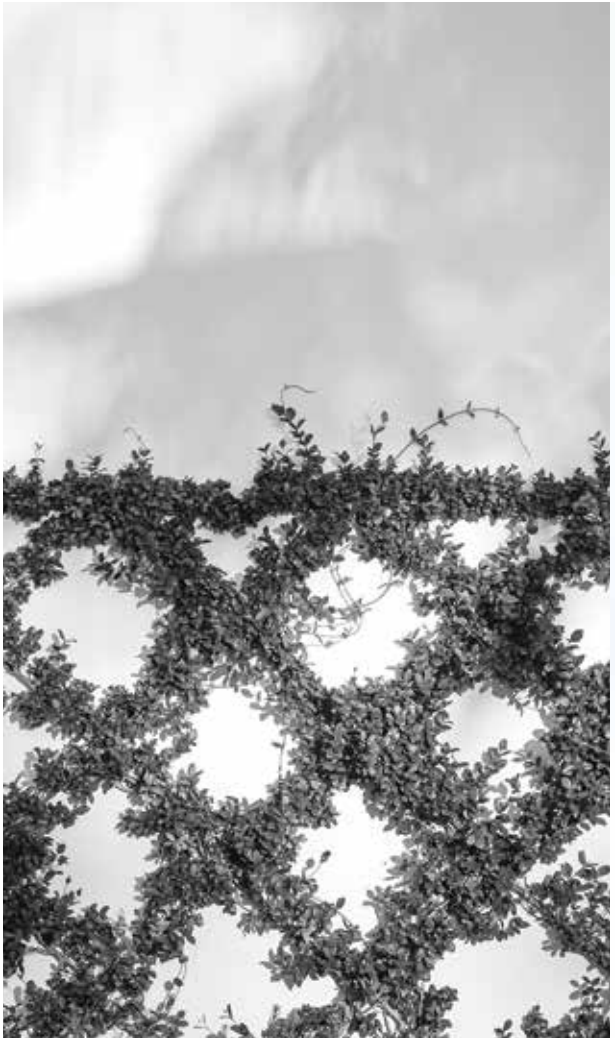


IF YOU BUILD IT,



THE
DEVELOPMENT
OF THE NAPLES

DESIGN DISTRICT
IS ELEVATING THE

HOME-DESIGN

EXPERIENCE.



Art Of Design

By
Tess Raines

Photography By
Tina Sargeant



T H E Y W I L L C O M E

Art Of Design



Only a few years ago, Naples became a hot spot—what was once a quiet, coastal town became a mecca of prosperity and luxury lifestyle along the Gulf. New residents poured in to join the experience, and the demand for a more personal, dynamic living space to reflect this lifestyle became nearly insatiable. The small mom-and-pop merchants residing in the heart of Naples helped meet

this need, and the summer of 2018, this area was christened the Naples Design District.

Although still young, the Naples Design District, which runs between the intersection of Tamiami Trail and Goodlette-Frank Road and pools out to Fifth Avenue South and Seventh Avenue North, is being cultivated to resemble other popular, more developed

design districts—like the Miami Design District—in both form and function. The area's muse on the east coast sits in an architecturally-sleek neighborhood, filled with dozens of upscale art galleries, restaurants and interior design shops. The Naples Design District boasts similar establishments. And with the Gulf just a few blocks away, it's no surprise the district has already gained



(far left) Chad Jensen, founding director of Method & Concept, in his Naples gallery. (center) Jensen built the DeVille bench for his final senior project in college. (right) Method & Concept collaborates with up-and-coming artists and designers who are testing the limits of their mediums.



momentum.

Over 30 accomplished art, design and architectural businesses dot the streets of the district, including Lisa Kahn Designs, Garden District, Patina Collection, Republic of Décor, Odegaard art + design, as well as nationally-recognized names like Kravet, Ferguson and Francois & Co. The businesses initiated a partnership, working together to provide their cus-

tomers with an engaging experience in a one-stop shop environment.

“We had a really good following within the last two years; it’s really taken off,” says Stacey Summers, who manages Summerfields home furnishings and accessories store along Central Avenue in the Design District. “I think the Design District just kind of coming together and putting those businesses in the area to-

gether have strengthened our stores and how we do business. We feed off each other; we know who’s got what so we can send people to other places if we don’t have stuff in our store.”

Randy Kurtz, co-founder of Kurtz Homes custom builders, with offices in the district, agrees. “I think it will be much more convenient for those renovating or building homes,” he says. “They

Art Of Design

can work with interior designers and cabinet companies in one area instead of going all around town.”

It was this idea that led to the creation of The Collective. A three-story, 69,099-square-foot retail center that serves as an upscale hub for local art and design businesses. The idea behind The Collective is that any need for the home can be addressed, planned and executed in one location.

Plans for the building show accommodations for several tenants, including Method & Concept furniture and gallery, Judith Liegeois Designs, Casa Italia, Unique Wood Floor Co., Stofft Cooney Architects, Kurtz Homes and more, who will all operate from personal suites customized to showcase their business. There is an adjoining four-story garage with 167 parking spots and an open, grassy courtyard with outdoor

seating.

On the second floor of The Collective, there’s a special corner dubbed The Studio. It’s designed to streamline resources and services for clients by referring them to the appropriate vendor in the space. Each vendor’s room is scheduled to have products and materials showcased, so the customer can see what the business offers, whether or not a representative is on the property.



A receptionist, conference room and refreshment bar are also planned for The Studio to allow a straightforward and effortless experience.

Each business is preparing for the opening of The Collective, which, as of press time, is slated for early 2020. Chad Jensen, the founding director of the gallery and design company, Method & Concept, is anticipating the transformation of the district into a design

destination. He sees the addition of The Collective as a major force behind the change.

“It’s kind of like the complete life cycle of the home environment, from the foundation,” says Jensen. “All the way from the architects, who start the conceptions, (to) the builders, the furniture, art and everything in between.”

Jensen helped promote the idea of the Naples Design District, around four

years ago, along with David Fruscione, the owner of Republic of Décor, Rufino Hernandez of the Garden District, Dan Summers of BSSW Architects and a handful of other business members in the area.

Fruscione recalls moving into his store on First Avenue in November 2015. “When I first opened, this entire block was redeveloped. People came in and asked, ‘Why are you here? It’s off



(far left) Stacey Summers in Summerfields. (center and right) Summerfields curates colorful accessories that can refresh the look of any living space.





the beaten path, nobody will find you,” he says.

While assimilating into the neighborhood, Fruscione felt a need to pull everyone together. “I started to reach out to different businesses and started to schedule meetings, and we would get together on a monthly basis and talk about things in the neighborhood,” Fruscione explains. “Word kind of spread and every

meeting we’d have a couple more people. Then we realized what we really needed to do was become an official organization.”

The founding members formed an association, the Naples Design District Merchant Association, and have since campaigned to recruit members and inform the community about the district. Fruscione says the team has been focus-

ing on improving the pedestrian experience, from beautifying the walkways to creating signs that brand the neighborhood for visitors. He’s been meeting with the city council to discuss the possibilities for the district.

The recently-completed Baker Park and plans for Gulfshore Playhouse’s new downtown theater are both within the boundaries of the Design District. These



David Fruscione in his Naples design studio, Republic of Décor. The shop sells contemporary design merchandise and offers interior decorating services.



expansions, as well as the high-end residential communities popping up around the district, look promising for the area. Each are vital in orchestrating more foot traffic to the Design District and establishing a stronger sense of community.

“We have all these different little flavorful things in the neighborhood,” says Jensen, citing the nearby consignment shops and restaurants. “It becomes

somewhere people want to explore a little bit, and they know it’s not just like a one-note thing throughout the entire district ... you can make more of an experience and a day out of it.”

Fruscione has already seen positive signs that the idea is catching on. Customers have strolled the sidewalks, peering into the stores, and have stopped by his place for a closer look. “A lot of peo-

ple come in who haven’t really explored much, and they’ll say, ‘I haven’t really gone up and down these streets, but I had no idea this was here.’ People expanded their minds a bit, discovered a new part of town,” he says. “I think that’s what people like when they’re exploring—a wide range of creative destinations.” ✂