

Excellence Award Recipient

Penny Armitage, R.A.

Architecture

President of Armitage Architecture

Buffalo, NY



“I’ve always been drawn to designing and creating spaces.”

In elementary school, Penny Armitage, R.A. remembers redesigning the school during history class, into her own home. Many of Penny’s extracurricular activities involved mini construction projects in her home.

“Fortunately, my parents were great about directing that energy and forgiving when an unapproved construction experiment on their house would go astray.”

After obtaining Master’s degrees in Architecture and Business, and holding several positions within AmeriCorps and Habitat for Humanity, Penny was able to not only hone her technical skills, but learned about the micro and macro levels of construction, design, and business on the whole.

“I worked for a number of years in nonprofit organizations. I left the nonprofit world and began working for an architecture firm in order to fulfill the requirements to obtain my architect license. It was during this time that I began trying to think of a way to create a hybrid company between the two.”

Over the years, Penny has stayed involved with the nonprofits, and continues to believe that her business endeavors should be responsible and help the surrounding communities. Between her parents and experiences early on, Penny believes she’s been inspired and guided to her life’s purpose and passion.

“I love designing buildings. The endless possibilities of what can be, that the act of designing brings about, is what has kept me and what continues to keep me passionate about my field.”

Now, Penny serves as the President and Principal Architect of Armitage Architecture. As Principal Architect, she oversees all architectural design and construction documents. As the President, she is responsible for the development and implementation of business strategy, and project procurement. Also, Penny serves as the President of Armitage Construction, where she continues to develop and implement business strategy, project procurement, and construction consulting on all projects.

“I didn’t have a mentor or anyone helping me when I first started out. I had to do a lot of research and teach myself how to start, market, and run a successful company. That path still continues today, which has turned out to be both an asset and a blessing.”

At the end of the day, Penny hopes to leave a positive impression on all of her nieces and nephews, and encourage them to be the unique people she knows them to be.

“I also want them to remember that you learn something from every person you encounter. Over time, the wealth of knowledge that you accumulate becomes invaluable both personally and professionally.”

In the following interview, Penny further discusses her job, career, and life’s passion”

Q&A

Q: How do you manage the work/life balance?

A: It's a constant struggle between needing time to invest in the company while also maintaining a healthy lifestyle. I try to set a reasonable work schedule that allows time for other areas of my life that are important to me to grow as well.

Q: Do you think "Green Building" will have a predominant role in architectural design in the future?

A: I think green building will eventually become an essential way to design buildings. The damage that has been done and that we are doing to the environment is becoming more obvious. We need to take care of what we've been given and preserve it for future generations.

Q: Is environmentally friendly design/construction affordable?

A: There are a variety of different approaches to sustainable design. There are design solutions and alternatives that don't necessarily involve expensive technology.

Q: Where did the inspiration for a social enterprise architecture firm come from?

A: I worked for a number of years in nonprofit organizations. I left the nonprofit world and began working for an architecture firm in order to fulfill the requirements to obtain my architect license. It was during this time that I began trying to think of a way to create a hybrid company between the two.

Q: What types of projects or organizations does the social enterprise aspect of your company invest in?

A: We've invested in a variety of different nonprofit organizations whose missions are meaningful to us. Some of the organizations we've donated to are Catholic Charities, Family Justice Center of Erie County, Habitat for Humanity, and Family Promise of WNY, just to name a few.

Q: How does technology impact the architectural profession today?

A: There have been great advances in architectural software. Building Information Modeling software, which we utilize, allows us to more effectively communicate with our clients and consultants using 3d renderings and computer modeling.

Q: What do you think makes your company different?

A: Our company is different due to our out of the box thinking. We develop innovative solutions to common problems. Whether it's in design or construction we are excellent at thinking of new and creative ways to approach design challenges.

Q: What types of projects do you work on?

A: We are a commercial architecture and construction firm. We have experience with multifamily housing, office buildings, medical buildings, adaptive re-use projects, places of worship, and mixed use buildings.

Q: What's typically found on your desk everyday?

A: The staples that I always have with me are my sketch book, a cup of coffee, and wrinkled index card, from being in my pocket, that I write a bible passage on to keep with me for the day.

