

# NEW MEXICO BUSINESS WEEKLY

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# New Mexico's Japan Connection

(Above) The damaged Fukushima Daiichi nuclear generating plant in Japan.

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## Nuclear fallout hits industry

*The Business Weekly this week explores the impact of Japan's March 11 earthquake and tsunami on elements of New Mexico's economy. See page listings below.*

BY KEVIN ROBINSON-AVILA | NMBW SENIOR REPORTER

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Radiation reportedly poses little threat beyond Japan, but economic fallout from that country's atomic disaster is impacting the nuclear industry in New Mexico.

Industry experts say approval of new reactors in the U.S. and elsewhere will most likely be delayed as regulatory authorities revisit safety issues at plants already operating.

Consequently, companies like Hyperion Power Generation Inc. in Los Alamos, which is building a new mini-nuclear reactor, could face longer and more arduous scrutiny from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

In addition, supporting players such as Urenco USA's uranium enrichment plant in Eunice and International Isotopes Inc., which plans

SEE NUCLEAR **4**



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BUSINESSWEEKLY

# From 700 SF office, HVL Interiors tackles major projects



RANDY SINER | NMBW

**HVL Interiors LLC partners Heather Van Luchene, left, and Steffany Hollingsworth worked on the interior design of the Hotel Parq Central in Albuquerque. They are pictured in the conservatory of the hotel, which was formerly a hospital.**

BY RACHEL SAMMS | NMBW ASSOCIATE EDITOR

HVL Interiors LLC isn't looking to grow. Not in terms of staff size, that is. Four people in a 700-square-foot space feels just right to this Santa Fe interior design firm.

But HVL is growing in plenty of other ways. The small firm was the interior designer on the high-profile, \$21 million renovation of the Hotel Parq Central in Albuquerque, completed last year.

While HVL is happy with its size, the company wants to keep building its profile and reach, eventually picking up some projects outside New Mexico.

"We try to provide enduring concepts for clients, thoughtful designs," said partner Heather Van Luchene.

She launched the company in 2001 as a solo practice. A few years ago, she met Steffany Hollingsworth through Design Santa Fe, an annual interior design forum. The two clicked, and Hollingsworth joined HVL.

"It was nice for both of us to have someone we would really feel comfortable bouncing things off of," Hollingsworth said.

That comfort level is evident: As one's sentence trails off, the other frequently jumps in to build on it.

HVL's employees thrive in their close quarters. With no physical barriers between them, updates about projects travel

fast. And they riff on each other's ideas "like a jazz band," Van Luchene said.

Although the office is stocked with unique items, it doesn't feel crowded. Light pours in through the tall front windows, illuminating tree branches rising out of old-fashioned glass bottles. Swatches of fabric in an array of textures and colors fill a back wall, and a big closet houses books of furnishings.

The company's business was about 20 percent residential and 80 percent commercial in 2010. Each designer has his or her own residential projects, but everyone pitches in on major commercial projects.

"We know as a team what we can handle, and we only take on projects where we can give a lot of attention," Van Luchene said.

HVL typically designs for houses priced at \$1 million or higher. Its residential projects range from \$25,000 to \$200,000. The company's revenue is around \$1.5 million, including furniture purchasing for clients. HVL has continued to grow during the recession. New construction work has slowed, but clients are redoing bedrooms or kitchens.

"There's a focus on staying at home" rather than going out, Van Luchene said.

Many of HVL's customers are empty nesters, typically well-traveled, with large art collections.

Van Luchene estimates 95 percent of

HVL's projects come from referrals. Frequent meetings and exchanges of ideas help the firm land those referrals. And as residential clients' lives change, their needs and tastes change, so if they're happy with HVL's work, there's a good chance they'll call on the company again.

Carol Graebner enlisted HVL's help after she moved from Kansas City to Santa Fe, where she had a home. HVL assisted Graebner in consolidating her two homes' furnishings.

"What was amazing to me was how they were able to utilize most everything I had and help me bring it together for a very reasonable cost," said Graebner, who has since enlisted HVL for other projects. "What makes HVL special is that they're very creative, but also very businesslike, which is sometimes a hard combination of personality and skill to find."

The Hotel Parq Central brought HVL on board about six months before construction began, and the interior design firm became an integral part of the construction team, said Marc Bertram, one of the hotel's developers. The facility was previously a hospital.

"What I think they did as good a job as anything on was really paying homage to the history of the building, but giving it a little more contemporary feel," Bertram said. "When we first began discussing it, it

**Vital Stats:**

**Company:** HVL Interiors LLC  
**Partners:** Heather Van Luchene, Steffany Hollingsworth  
**Address:** 1012 Marquez Place, Suite 205A  
 Santa Fe 87505  
**Phone:** (505) 983-3601  
**Website:** hvlinteriors.com  
**Employees:** four  
**Revenue:** \$1.5 million  
 (including furniture purchasing for clients)

**Strategies:**

1. Think about what kind of growth is a fit for your firm. HVL is happy with its staff size, but wants to broaden its reputation and pick up some out-of-state work.
2. Stay in touch with professionals in related fields as a source of referrals.
3. The minutiae of projects can be time-consuming, so set aside time for endeavors that focus solely on creativity.

was a pretty tall order."

The company's work was always on or under budget, Bertram added, a challenge on such a complex project.

At HVL, project management gets as much attention as the design process, Hollingsworth said. That means making sure materials needed for a project are delivered on time and on budget.

That process has gotten more complicated during the recession. Getting product on time is tougher, as many companies aren't shipping orders until they have enough to fill a truck or container in order to save on fuel costs. Manufacturers are discontinuing fabrics or making them to order. Textile mills are going out of business. Ensuring the availability of materials for a client's project means lots of negotiating, and researching the vendor to ensure it will be able to deliver.

Juggling design work with those kinds of details means "you're using both sides of your brain in a strong way," Van Luchene said.

To ensure that designers' creative muscles are getting enough exercise, HVL creates design schemes for projects that don't exist yet. The tabletop tableaus incorporate everything from swatches of material to found objects and pictures from magazines. HVL uses the schemes for prospective clients, or posts them on Facebook. That allows the designers to express their personalities and show their approachability.

The firm is interested in sustainable design, and hopes to make more elements of its projects "green" in years to come. There are lots of affordable, green options in paint and carpet, HVL's partners said, but other parts of the industry, such as fabric, are still catching up. Educating clients about green options involves a learning curve, too.

But design trends are evolving toward natural and organic materials, Hollingsworth said: "People are so much more glued to their technology that they need that contrast in life to balance out."

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