

SEVERAL MID-SIZED DESIGN FIRMS  
SHARE BEST PRACTICES AND SECRETS  
TO SUCCESS *By JoAnn Greco*

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CROWNE PLAZA NORTH AUGUSTA, GEORGIA

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While large design firms might seem to have the advantages with financing and staff, and small boutiques carry a reputation for having more time to devote to client relations, the in-between outfits seek out a delicate middle ground—to be both nimble and able to manage a bigger workload. In pre-COVID-19 conversations, we talked to four mid-sized firms employing more than 15 staff members that are tackling these issues in order to find that much-coveted balance.





BARBARA PARKER



MIRIAM TORRES



THE WHITLEY, ATLANTA

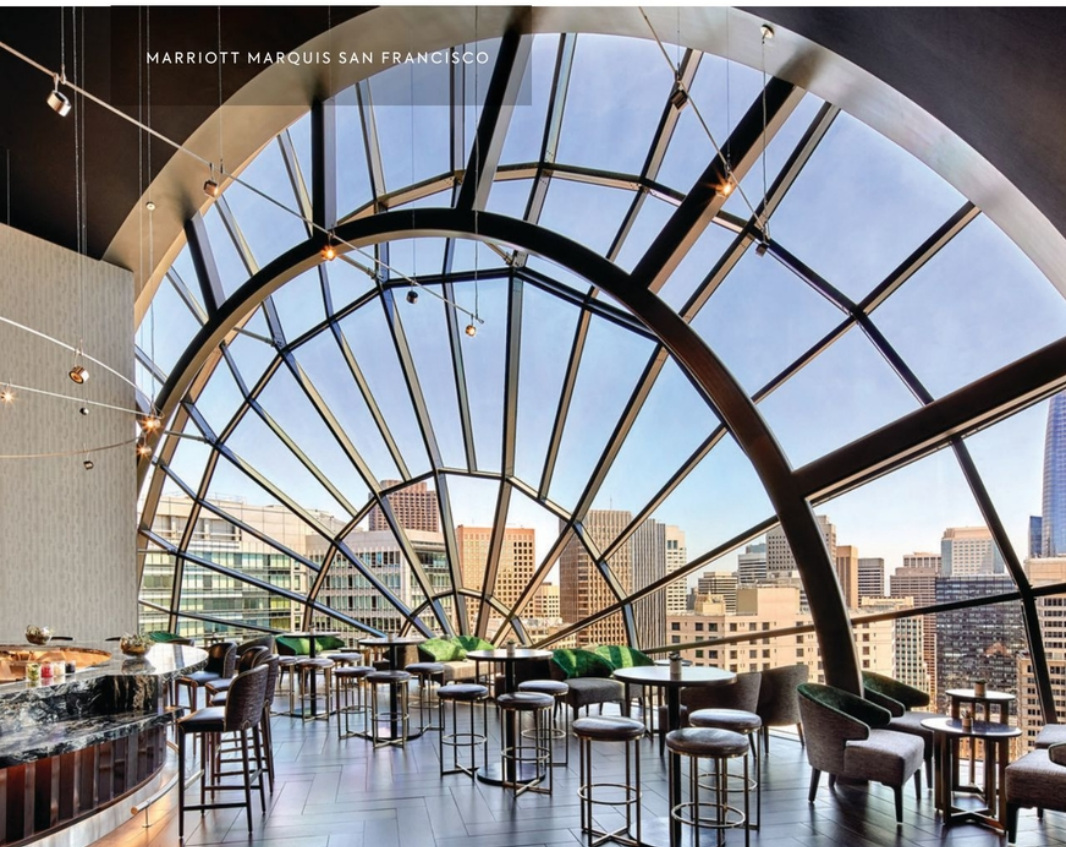
## PARKER-TORRES

Barbara Parker and Miriam Torres have now worked as a team almost as long as they had maintained prior separate careers. Founded in 2004, their firm has recently completed projects such as a new spa and lobby redo for the Phoenician in Scottsdale, design for the new InterContinental Washington D.C. — The Wharf, and renovations of the San Antonio Marriott Rivercenter. “Together, we’ve played to our strengths and found our niches,” says Parker. “Miriam is definitely more gregarious, so she’s our public face when it comes to meeting and greeting. I’m happy to stay in the office doing invoices and scheduling.”

Over the years, Parker-Torres Design has grown to a total of 30 staff members, a number it reached, and settled into comfortably, a few years ago. “We’ve never wanted to grow too big or take on too much because we don’t want to lose quality or control,” says Parker. “But for a period of time, we were held back by the limitations of our leased space. When the tenants on either side of us left, we could finally spread out and were able to add a few people.”

With that growth, the women have been able to hire right-hand people, like a director of design and director of projects, although Torres still reviews everything that goes out the door. Parker says that the staff’s range of ages—from early 20s to early 60s—brings a vital mix of energy and wisdom. “Our vision stays fresh, but we’re based in reality,” she laughs.

While the partners, both in their late 50s, “occasionally—for about three minutes”—talk about succession planning, they’re simply too busy to dwell on it, Parker says. “We’re really lucky to have had several interns who seven or eight years later are now running their own projects. We work really hard to give people more opportunity and to help them grow.” **BD**



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