



Aline Architecture Concepts founders Brian Laubenthal (left) and Brian Krob specialize in adaptive reuse commercial projects spanning restaurants and hospitality. PHOTOS BY ALINE ARCHITECTURE CONCEPTS

Scottsdale architecture firm specializes in adaptive reuse projects

Georgann Yara
Special for the Arizona Business Gazette

They knew they'd be architects since they were kids. But Aline Architecture Concepts founders Brian Laubenthal and Brian Krob discovered their niche in the wake of an event that doomed many companies in the industries they serve.

Both met while working at a previous firm. Although their respective career paths took them in different directions, it also brought them back together when the recession took its toll on their respective firms and they reunited to tie up loose ends on various projects. It was 2010. Dwindling resources guided them to the reuse business model upon which Aline was built.

"(There was) nothing here. How can we use this?" Krob recalled. "We looked to our values... we are stewards of the environment."

Laubenthal added, "We want to do great work with design, but there were not a lot of firms doing adaptive reuse. It's something we are really excited about."

That sparked the start of their Scottsdale firm, which specializes in commer-

What: Aline Architecture Concepts

Where: 7340 E. Main St., #210, Scottsdale

Employees: Nine

Interesting stat: Forty-eight percent of all projects currently being pursued by U.S. firms involve the renovation, rehabilitation, extension, or preservation of existing buildings, according to the American Institute of Architects.

Details: 480-980-9039, madewithaline.com

cial projects with much of it in hospitality and restaurants. The founders' affinity for adaptive reuse projects drives much of their business, which has averaged 40% growth year over year, Laubenthal said.

Their firm has 25-30 jobs a year, Krob said, with the scale of projects growing over the years.

Bourbon & Bones, Fate Brewing Company and the new Scottsdale brunch

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With the Chasse Building Team office, Aline Architecture Concepts took an old warehouse and transformed it into a modern and sustainable facility with lots of natural light, fresh air and landscaping.

Reuse

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spot The Eleanor are among Aline's newer, high-profile projects. For Eleanor, this involved moving the old Polynesian Dairy Queen tiki-style building from its former home on McDowell Road and 68th Street to its current location on Hayden Road just south of Osborne Road.

Aline is also responsible for commercial buildings like the headquarters of Chase Building Team, a Tempe-based firm also known for its sustainable projects.

Here, Aline started with an industrial warehouse with few windows or connections to the outdoors. In the end, the building was designed to have a zero net rating and flaunt openings to allow for the flow of fresh air, natural light thanks to solar tubs, exterior patios and lush landscaping.

"Everywhere you sit in that office, you see greenery," Laubenthal said. "We can take something that has constraints but really bring a new life and opportunities to it. That kind of character we're bringing... that sets us apart."

Their specialty in adaptive reuse is another distinguishing characteristic. Working with an existing structure and executing the vision for it poses challenges that new construction does not. Understanding the building, how it deals with water flow when it rains and its literal nuts and bolts, needs a different approach, Krob explained.

"It has its quirks. It's harder and more time consuming. Some are so quick to say, 'Let's tear this down,' or 'We'll figure it out.' (But) no, it's not that easy," Krob said. "There's nostalgia and history... This is how we keep the soul in what we do."

Tom Frenkel, owner of Clayton Companies real estate company, has collaborated with Aline for 15 projects over the last 13 years. When Aline was starting out, Laubenthal and Krob moved into an office in Clayton Companies' building. They remain in that space today.

It didn't take long for Frenkel, who was familiar with their former employers, to tap their expertise.

"They were young, looking to go out on their own with great, active energy," Frenkel said. "They were hungry and I was excited about giving them a try."



Much of Aline Architecture Concepts' projects are in hospitality and restaurants, including Clever Koi, pictured here.

ALINE ARCHITECTURE CONCEPTS

Being a small firm allows clients direct access to Laubenthal and Krob, which Frenkel said makes a difference. Being able to maximize square footage, comprehension of what clients want in terms of function and a creative eye for design is a combination that impresses Frenkel as well.

"It's very rare to find an architect who can do all three well," he said.

Laubenthal did internships at architecture firms while in high school in Battle Creek, Michigan, before heading west to attend Arizona State University. He was earning his master's degree and had an internship at the firm where Krob, whose architecture experience started with internships at 16 in his hometown of Las Vegas, worked.

The co-workers would team up on projects, mostly in the high-end hospi-

tality realm, and a friendship grew from there.

Laubenthal went on to another firm that would shut down after the recession. Krob left the firm he was working for to help Laubenthal finish various projects. This is where the seed for Aline was planted. The recession slowdown gave them time to research, do the prep work and learn what it takes to run a business.

"At the time, it was easier to start a company than find a job," Laubenthal said.

Word quickly got out that The Brians, as they would soon be known, had their own firm. Previous clients from former employers reached out to them and for the first 1½-years, they took nearly every job no matter how simple. This, Krob said, got them through the first few

years.

In addition to commercial projects, hospitality and restaurants, Aline does custom work, some residential and some work for nonprofits.

"A lot of our projects become a hub in the community. With our collaborations, we are creating something that's different from what 90% of architects do," Krob said.

Looking for something beyond basic that is design-oriented and far from cookie cutter is what clients have in common, Laubenthal said.

"I love that we're able to make a positive impact on our community, save some of these buildings from going to landfills and make a difference in people's lives," Laubenthal said. "Those kinds of opportunities are what we revel in."