

# Design Prosthetics

With its luxurious style in high demand for physician's offices and health clinics, Elaine Williamson Designs decided it was at the perfect juncture to add a new, green arm to its award-winning interiors firm

**launched**  
August 2010

**location**  
Dallas

**distinction**  
As demand soared for the firm's luxurious design style in the health-care sector, it created a green division to ensure that its interiors are as healthy as the patients to which they cater

**website**  
[elainewilliamsondesigns.com](http://elainewilliamsondesigns.com)



**Who:** Elaine Williamson Designs is an interior-design group moving in the right direction. Established by award-winning interior designer Elaine Williamson, the firm has made the official transition into green design with a division that focuses on LEED-certified projects.

**What:** Nine months ago, the firm launched a LEED-accredited residential- and commercial-design division. Williamson says that as the firm was already working with green materials—especially for commercial clients—it just made sense.

“A lot of eco-products have a lot of texture to them,” Williamson says, “so we sort of naturally gravitated that way, more so in the commercial arena. We thought, ‘Why don’t we make a formal commitment to this? Why not make a commitment to those who are more focused, like a lot of the retailers are?’” She notes that it makes a difference to have the formal accreditation, adding weight, responsibility, and legitimacy to the effort. ASID Allied Member Joanna Jackson, LEED AP, has been brought on board to head up the new LEED division.

**When:** Though the firm was founded 20 years ago, this formally green arm was added in August 2010.

**Where:** The firm's location in Dallas, brings most of Williamson's clients from the city and the surrounding region, but she has also worked on projects in Austin and various cities around the country. High-end residential clients make up 60 percent of the firm's work [the firm recently completed work on a 5,000-square-foot home near Dallas that incorporates numerous eco-friendly features], while the remaining 40 percent comprise commercial projects, especially physician's offices and retailers.

**Why:** Green credentials are increasingly valuable. “It puts us out there,” Williamson says, “especially commercially. It makes the announcement that we can execute.” She acknowledges that not much building was going on at the end of 2010—and those who are building aren't in the “frame of mind to get expensive items.” But with 20 years of experience behind her, Williamson foresees the firm's LEED department continuing to be in high demand throughout 2011, as more green-minded projects arise in Dallas. “We expect it to be huge,” she says.

**How:** As one might expect, with each new project, the firm's designers meet to brainstorm and look at the project through the client's eyes. But, to get a true feel for the client's likes and dislikes, the client is asked to complete a questionnaire. A homeowner may be asked things like, ‘Are you a bath or shower person? How long do you spend in the shower? Do you drink spirits at night?’”

Though Williamson admits that some of these questions may seem a bit personal, she explains that the answers give the firm a more solid vision of what takes priority in the client's lifestyle. “It can tell us how important the bar is,” she continues. “We can ask ‘Do you entertain or not?’ but this approach takes it a bit further—we interview them while they interview us.”

In addition to residences, Elaine Williamson Designs is sought after in the medical world. After employing its luxurious design style for a doctor's office for the first time three years ago, Williamson said her firm has been called on again and again to work on other physicians' offices. “It's a new approach in Dallas, this home-style approach to take off the medicinal feel,” she explains.

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—Elaine Williamson, Founder

“It’s luxurious—all the things you’d never expect in a doctor’s office.”

It starts by thinking like a doctor—or at least a psychologist. “We practice a bit of psychology: we create this ambiance and experience, not just, ‘How many patient chairs do we need?’ but...a more home-style approach, so it has more of a hospitable appeal,” Williamson says. “We tailor fragrances to each office for a more relaxed atmosphere. It’s not just interactive design—it’s the overall element. We make people feel as comfortable as we can. We don’t want anything emitting from anything because they’re already in pain. We want to make it feel like a place they don’t dread going to.”

Especially where human health is concerned, but also for every project they work on, the firm uses its tried-and-true approach to maximize its new green mission. “It’s not just the furniture,” Williamson says sagely. “It’s everything about the interior and exterior, including landscape.” —by *Suchi Rudra*



OPPOSITE PAGE, BELOW: This Austin dining-room project exemplifies Elaine Williamson Designs’ commitment to designing for experience. RIGHT: Founder Elaine Williamson says she would often gravitate toward green products because they had more texture.

