

# PROFILE



FIRM'S FOCUS ON BIM WORKFLOWS BUILDS A BEAUTIFUL COMMUNITY

## CEARNAL ANDRULAITIS ARCHITECTURE & INTERIOR DESIGN

Nothing says “emerging architecture firm” like a dining room table posing as an office desk, which is precisely how the prominent Santa Barbara firm of Cearnal Andrulaitis Architecture & Interior Design got off the ground. Brian Cearnal opened for business in 1983, relegating family meals to other rooms in the house. A year later, he moved his operation to the garage before establishing more permanent commercial space in town and hiring a staff to support his growing business.

Today, as founder and partner, Cearnal remains the backbone of the firm, which he leads with Joe Andrulaitis, a fellow Cal Poly grad. The 11-person

firm focuses on architectural and interior design on Santa Barbara’s South Coast. Employees include licensed architects, an interior designer, operations personnel, as well as junior architects working toward their licenses.

Andrulaitis was a recent college graduate when he joined the firm in 1993 as a junior draftsman. When considering job opportunities, he interviewed with Cearnal on a Friday afternoon. The day’s calendar featured “Beer:30,” an office tradition that gave team members the chance to wind down and have fun after a demanding week. “I liked the vibe—there was clearly a work-hard/play-hard philosophy that

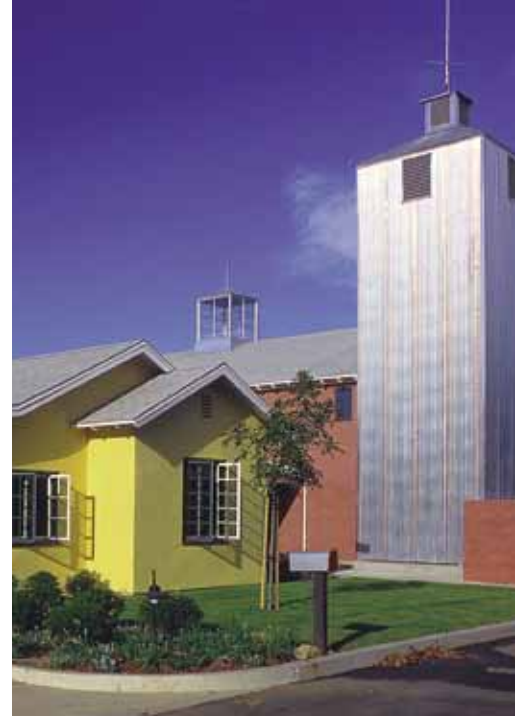
I found attractive,” Andrulaitis recalls. Today, job site visits sometimes supplant Beer:30, but it remains an office tradition, and Andrulaitis wouldn’t have it any other way. He became a partner at the firm in 2003 and beams at the success the company has enjoyed since his hiring.

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The Santa Barbara Bank & Trust building was reconceived as a three-story structure whose facades make a prominent architectural statement.



Constructed on a tight budget, the Goleta Fire Station features a spire-topped cupola and a hose drying tower clad to resemble a silo.

### COMMUNITY-FOCUSED DESIGN

Cearnal's interests in and understanding of the community, along with his belief that design matters, have been the keystones of that success. "Our responsibility to the thorough understanding of each challenge we encounter ensures unique design solutions to meet our clients' aesthetic, budgetary, and program objectives," he says.

Indeed, Cearnal has created a legacy of community leadership and quality design, and he has an unparalleled record of successfully coordinating challenging projects through the local approval process. "We do a lot of prominent projects in and around Santa Barbara," he says. "The visibility of our high-quality work brings in new business. If someone wants their projects in this town to be successful, they come to us."

*"Our greatest asset is our ability to achieve results through teamwork—always striving for innovative and sustainable design solutions, always grounded in integrity and honesty, and always committed to the collective service of our clients and our community."*

— Brian Cearnal, AIA, LEED AP, Founder & Partner, Cearnal Andrulaitis

The Santa Barbara Bank & Trust building is a good example of the firm's local commitment. Designed with Vectorworks® software from start to finish, this project involved replacing the bank's corporate offices destroyed in a fire. Reconceived as a three-story structure to take advantage of its mountain and ocean views, the building now makes a prominent architectural statement, incorporating into its façade a new entrance into the city parking lot, as well as a pedestrian walkway.

Another example of the firm's civic design focus is the Goleta Fire Station. Comprised of nearly 7,000 square feet, the building houses a fire station and an essential services office. It was designed in a vernacular architectural style to reflect the local traditions and character. The complex is nestled in the middle of an existing avocado orchard. The apparatus bay, therefore, emulates a barn-like structure and the living quarters embody a turn-of-the-century farmhouse. A silo-like tower clad in corrugated metal completes the composition.

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*"Our office is a vital and creative environment where great design and quality relationships come first. We pride ourselves on the varied nature of our work and the unique design solutions each project manifests."*

— Joe Andrulaitis, AIA, LEED BD+C, Partner,  
Cearnal Andrulaitis



### SERGE LAYS OUT THE WELCOME MAT

Such projects take on a life of their own inside Cearnal Andrulaitis' historic downtown Santa Barbara office—a vital, creative environment where great design and quality relationships come first. Visitors are first greeted by office mascot, Serge, a Golden Retriever owned by Cearnal whose been known to slobber a client or two and swipe food off the desks of unsuspecting architects.

Next, clients often meet with Cearnal. As the initial face of the firm, its Cearnal's vision that leads the collaborative process as concepts come together. Sometimes, this means an office lunch, where ideas are tossed around along with sandwich condiments. Staff members debate how to approach a project collectively and then refine the design before determining how best to parse out the workload.

"When we get a client, they become part of our design family," says Cearnal. "We get to know them as much as possible—what problems or issues they face, and what they're looking for. From there, it's about fulfilling a client's needs with a timeless design. We approach each project with a goal of creating a solution given a specific set of constraints

regarding city guidelines or environmental factors. We aim to stay true to what we think a good design is for each project."

Once the client approves a design, the team might expand or be revised to meet the scope of the project. For example, Cearnal Andrulaitis does a lot of work within El Pueblo Viejo, Santa Barbara's historic design district, which requires a stringent evaluation by Santa Barbara's local review board. Because of its vast experience with civic projects, the firm is well-versed in how to present plans and follow the necessary permitting requirements to see a project through smoothly.

From there, projects evolve in a studio environment devoid of enclosed office spaces. Everything is out in the open, which is central to successful collaboration. "Our open-studio concept means we can all access each other and share ideas," says Andrulaitis. "This can get intense as deadlines approach. Everyone feels that stress. But it also means we all know each project's status at any given time and can lend a hand as needed."

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*Construction is underway on Alma del Pueblo, a multi-use project designed using a BIM workflow to achieve a LEED for Homes Platinum designation.*

### SUSTAINABLE ARCHITECTURE

In addition to its community focus, Cearnal Andrulaitis has long been committed to sustainable architecture. "Conscious choices in our planning, design, building methods, and materials is central to what we do," says Cearnal. "We continually work to educate ourselves and our clients about how we can create buildings that lessen the load on our planet."

Andrulaitis echoes Cearnal's viewpoint. "Sustainability isn't just a buzz word for us. Rather, doing sustainable design is just a natural part of doing good architecture. Orienting a building to optimize energy performance, for example, is just a good building approach. It isn't any fancier than that."

The firm's recent project, Alma del Pueblo, due for completion in the fall of 2013, is a great example of its focus on sustainable design. The space is a large Mission-style building with Colonial Revival features that sits between the Historic Arlington Theater and the bustling Santa Barbara Public Market. The energy provided by these bordering neighbors provides an unmatched spirit and soul. Alma del Pueblo will eventually feature 37 residential units, including spacious studios, as well as elegant one- and two-bedroom homes and stores atop podium parking. Courtyards, a club room, and a rooftop garden complete the project, which was designed to achieve a LEED for Homes Platinum designation and was produced with Vectorworks software using a BIM workflow from concept through completion.

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*Bella Riviera is one of the firm's largest BIM projects to date. Shown here is an elevation of one of the 115 townhomes nestled on the site and a photo of Andrulaitis, Cearnal, and office mascot Serge, walking through the site.*

### BIM WORKFLOW STREAMLINES HOUSING PROJECT

A user of Vectorworks software since the late 1980s, the firm embraced a building information modeling (BIM) workflow into its design process more than a decade ago. By evolving their workflows from 2D to 3D with BIM, they've applied this methodology to the design and construction of their buildings, which puts them on the cutting edge of how many firms choose to do architecture today.

One of the firm's biggest BIM projects to date is Bella Riviera. This project, spearheaded by the Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital Foundation in the hills of Santa Barbara, involved the construction of 115 townhomes on the site of the former St. Francis Hospital campus. Of these homes, 81 were affordably made available to employees of the larger Cottage Health System, thereby enabling the foundation to attract and retain medical professionals in the community. The project encompasses six acres, and its residents are enjoying the terraced site, which captures grand ocean views and the enchanting scenic coastline, as well as features that include native craftsman architecture, as well as the dramatic whites and terra-cotta hues of Spanish-colonial design.

When conceiving Bella Riviera, the Cearnal Andrulaitis team applied a BIM workflow using the Vectorworks program throughout the entire creative process. This included modeling all the units, generating sections and elevations, and more. "Vectorworks proved to be a great timesaver," says Andrulaitis, explaining that a team of two to four architects and designers worked on the project at any given time throughout its evolution. "Because the project is composed of several townhouse units, we were able to isolate each unit into individual files for people to work on separately," he adds. "This was an efficient way to break up the work and responsibilities to keep the project on schedule."

For other endeavors, Cearnal Andrulaitis breaks projects into model and sheet layers where one file functions as the base model file containing the building with all the floors, walls, roofs, windows, and doors. A separate file is then created for the sheet files that include working drawings for floor plans, elevations, interior elevations, and more. Again, this approach lets team members work on separate files individually, and provides an efficient workflow.

Whichever way projects are coordinated, all files are workgroup referenced, so they automatically update from one file to the next. If someone makes a change to the model file, the software updates the reference and copies it to all other sheet files. "When we only worked in 2D, it was tedious to complete all our elevations and sections while showing multiple window sizes and heights correctly," says Andrulaitis. "When designing with a BIM workflow, however, this tedium disappears and saves us a tremendous amount of time. Plus, just having windows and doors correctly located is a win-win. The same is true graphically with elevations. We can mask and outline the model the way we want, and get the line depths we want in elevated views."

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*The firm executed a significant, seismic upgrade of the 97-room Canary Hotel and applied an Andalusian style, which carries into the interiors and reflects the heritage of early California.*

### EVOLVING TO 3D WITH BIM

Cearnal Andrulaitis enjoys the ease of working with Vectorworks software. “We’ve had great success training our younger architects because the platform is straightforward and easy to learn,” says Andrulaitis. “I prefer its robust capabilities over competitor products because of its powerful 2D tools and its ability to produce 3D renderings.”

Andrulaitis even used the application to remodel his own home, a 1950s cottage, which he recently doubled to its current 2,200-square-foot form. “I created a highly detailed model of my house in Vectorworks. I modeled everything—right down to the gutters,” he says.

Cearnal adds that Vectorworks is a “do-it-all program” that he also uses for animation. “I play around with the camera tool to help with my presentations to the local review board. It’s great for helping clients visualize how a space will look as you walk through it,” he adds.

Looking ahead, the firm intends to explore Open BIM workflows to achieve true interoperability by utilizing the international, standardized data format called Industry Foundation Classes (IFC). Already, the firm has experimented with exporting IFC information from Vectorworks software as part of an integrated design project it conceptualized for a health care organization.

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"We played around with IFC compatibility and tested what our design partners who used a different product could see on their end," says Andrulaitis. "The tests assured us that we could successfully collaborate with other team members using different programs. The project never went further than initial exporting and importing on our partners' end, but the technical support team at Nemetschek Vectorworks talked us through the initial set up, and we're excited to explore this concept further with future projects."

For a firm that likes to seek faster and easier ways to drive workflow efficiencies with BIM, you can be sure that Cearnal Andrulaitis will evolve and take advantage of new developments in Vectorworks software as it further beautifies Santa Barbara. We can't wait to see what emerges from this talented team.



*Eight garden townhomes make up Bella Vita, uniting form, function, and beauty in the Spanish Courtyard tradition. Each unit has a unique floor plan and exquisite detailing.*

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