



HILL MECHANICAL GROUP
Chicago's Proven
HVAC Design-Build
Specialists [Click Here](#)

WINDFALL
ENTERPRISES INCORPORATED

buyers & sellers of
office furnishings

847.382.7181 [Barrington, IL](#)
"Form Follows Function..." [Fresh Office Environments](#)

Stetler & Waldorf
Commercial Real Estate
Career Management &
Recruitment Services



[click here](#)

ConstructWorks™

The Leader in
Construction
Project Leads.

[click here](#)



**onShore
hotWire**

Scorchingly Fast Internet Services

Aug 12, 2002

IK + Associates Build Rapport

Growing up in San Jose Casas Caidas, a small town in Jalisco, Mexico, Manuel Hernandez learned a strong work ethic and an acute attention to detail. Although born Chicago, Hernandez spent his childhood and the start of his adolescent years in what translated means the village of Fallen Houses.

Growing up under the direction of his grandfather, a furniture carpenter who designed own carpentry tools, and his father, a construction worker, Hernandez was exposed to generations of dedicated craftsmanship.

"On the weekends I would go with my dad to some of his remodeling jobs," Hernandez says. "I didn't like the dirty work, but I enjoyed being in that environment. I would see my dad working off plans and ask my dad who did them, and tell him that I wanted to do that."

Hernandez returned to Chicago in time to enroll in Schurz High School. There, he competed in the annual Newhouse Architecture Competition and won second place for gymnasium design.

His competitive achievement landed him at Skidmore Owings & Merrill where he completed a summer internship working on projects such as the NBC Tower in Chicago and the Canary Warf in London. He then went on to study architecture at the University of Chicago where he picked up valuable design skills and met his future business partner, Ivan Kutlesa.

Kutlesa, a native of Chicago, has roots extending from Croatia. With their ethnic divers combined with diametric design strengths, Kutlesa and Hernandez bring harmonizing skills to the drawing board.

"We always did projects together in school and just had a great rapport with each other," Kutlesa says. "Manny is really the better designer though. He brings that imaginative perspective to a project and he can always see the really big picture."

After graduating in 1992, the duo followed separate paths. Hernandez, unimpressed with the design positions available, ended up at Shah Engineering where he learned an appreciation for the industry's mechanical and structural engineering role. Kutlesa, on the other hand, continued in design as a project architect with Warman Olsen Warman Ltd.

Since their post-graduation positions, both designers have enhanced their skills - Hernandez exploring his creative pallet at Elias Pappageorge Architects, Kutlesa mastering his technical and financial capabilities. Now able to bring new achievements to the team, the two have rejoined to create IK + Associates. Although only in existence for a few months, the two-man firm has picked up enough clients to keep the partners on the clock day and night.

Maintaining a dedication to follow each project from design to completion, Hernandez says IK + Associates can offer a more personalized approach to each project. Looking down the road of IK's future, Hernandez says he imagines the firm will develop into a well-known design entity. Until then, Hernandez says they will build on their ever-growing reputation. "We're new, we're fresh, we're hungry," Hernandez says.

Latest Headlines