

Outstanding Women in Business 2026

Angela Austin, MM Interior Design Group



2026 Outstanding Women in Business reflect a Triad strength by leading in diverse sectors

TBJ's Outstanding Women in Business awards give us one of my favorite moments of the year – the chance to slow down and really celebrate the women who are leading, building and strengthening the Triad in meaningful ways. The 2026 honorees are an impressive group, and together they tell a powerful story about what leadership looks like in our region right now.

What stands out immediately is just how senior and influential this group is. More than half of this year's 25 honorees serve in top executive roles – including presidents, CEOs and chief officers – and many are owners, founders or partners of the organizations they lead. These women aren't just contributing at a high level; they're setting direction, making big decisions and shaping culture from the top.

The range of industries represented is just as compelling. This year's honorees come from architecture and design, finance, health



KRISTEN SAUNDERS

care, higher education, manufacturing, law, marketing, philanthropy, nonprofit leadership and social services. There's no single path or profession that defines success here – and that diversity is a real strength for the Triad's economy.

Even more impressive is how deeply connected these leaders are to the communities they serve. Many are leading nonprofits, expanding access to care, supporting seniors, investing in education, mentoring the next generation, and creating opportunities for women and girls across the region. Their impact reaches well beyond their job titles and organizations.

At Triad Business Journal, our mission is to shine a light on the people who are moving our region forward. This year's Outstanding Women in Business honorees do exactly that. They lead with intention, they lift others as they go, and they make the Triad a stronger place to live and work.

Kristen Saunders
SENIOR EVENTS DIRECTOR



ANGELA AUSTIN

Partner, MM Interior Design Group

Education: BFA in Interior Architecture, UNC-Greensboro; undergraduate Business minor
NCIDQ certified and licensed by the NC Board of Architecture and Registered Interior Designers.

Why selected:

What are you responsible for? As a partner and design director at MM Interior Design Group, I help lead the firm's strategic direction, day-to-day operations, and marketing initiatives. With a team of 15 employees and 2 interns, our woman-owned firm is known for bold ideas, efficient execution, and transformative design experiences. Since becoming a partner in 2021, I've guided both high-end residential and boutique commercial projects, bringing creative vision and trusted leadership to every phase from early concepts to final install. I work closely with clients, lead designers, architects, contractors, and vendors to ensure seamless collaboration and exceptional outcomes. I'm NCIDQ-certified and licensed by the Board of Architecture & Registered Interior Designers, credentials that allow me to engage in architectural planning and ensure technical precision. Beyond project work, I'm committed to mentoring the next generation of designers and cultivating a fun, productive, and high-performing team culture. My role balances business growth, creative excellence, and relationship-building, all in service of shaping spaces that move people and partnerships that last.

How did you get started in your career? I've always believed that well-designed spaces can change lives, and that belief took shape early. While studying Interior Architecture at UNCG, I helped design and build a home here in Greensboro that still provides transitional housing for young women who are homeless or survivors of domestic violence. It was a

powerful introduction to how design can offer not just beauty, but safety, dignity, and hope. That experience cemented my passion for spaces that serve people. After college, I joined Natuzzi in High Point as a Brand Coordinator, where I deepened my understanding of luxury furniture and showroom design. Traveling to Italy with the company broadened my perspective on international design and craftsmanship. I then spent seven years with Bassett Furniture in various roles from Visual Merchandising to Architectural Project Management which gave me invaluable experience in space planning, brand standards, and the operational side of design at scale.

What are you passionate about? The power of design to create meaningful change not just aesthetically, but emotionally and functionally. The right space can inspire confidence, restore calm, support connection, and help people feel truly seen. That belief has guided every step of my career. Whether I'm working with a young family designing their dream home, a small business redefining their customer experience, or mentoring a rising designer on our team, I'm driven by the same goal: to bring clarity, creativity, and purpose to the process. I love the complexity of design the layers of vision, structure, and collaboration and I'm passionate about leading teams through that journey with both precision and heart. At the end of the day, what fuels me most is knowing that our work doesn't just change how spaces look it changes how people live in them.

Achievement you are most proud of? Becoming design director and partner at MM Interior Design, a women-owned powerhouse!

Next big professional goal? My next big goal is to continue to elevate MM Interior Design Group as one of the most sought-after design partners, not just for our creative excellence, but for how we lead projects, support our clients, and collaborate across industries. That includes continuing to strengthen our relationships with clients, architects, builders, and developers. I want MMIDG to be the first call when someone has a bold idea and needs a team who can bring it to life. Internally, I'm passionate about mentoring our growing team and championing the next generation of women leaders in design.

What do you like to do when you are not working? When I'm not immersed in design, I enjoy exploring the outdoors, trying new adventures, spending time with my husband and beagle while seeking out the best coffee in the area.

Something about you that would surprise people: I am competitive, even if I don't know how to play the game.

Someone who fostered your growth and how it influenced you: Marta Mitchell has been an incredible mentor, role model, and now partner. From the beginning, she saw not just my design skills, but my potential as a leader. She gave me the space to grow, the feedback to improve, and the confidence to take bold steps including eventually stepping into ownership. What's most inspiring about Marta is her combination of creative vision and business strength. She leads with integrity, empowers the people around her, and has built

a firm where collaboration and excellence go hand in hand. Her trust in me changed the trajectory of my career, and I try to pay that forward every day with the designers I now mentor.

How have you supported other women as they pursue their careers? Mentorship is one of the most meaningful parts of my role. I've had the privilege of guiding and championing many incredible women on our team — from interns finding their voice to senior designers stepping into leadership. I believe in creating a culture where women feel heard, trusted, and empowered to lead boldly.

The most unusual thing in your purse, briefcase, laptop bag or backpack? Heavy duty picture hanging hardware.

Photos from the Event:





Print Article in the Triad Business Journal:



OUTSTANDING
WOMEN IN BUSINESS

**ANGELA
AUSTIN**

PARTNER, MM INTERIOR
DESIGN GROUP

Achievement that makes you most proud? Becoming design director and partner at MM Interior Design, a women-owned powerhouse! And supporting and leading other women in business.

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PORTRAITS BY JULIE KNIGHT