



## Designer Profile

CIDQ has started a series about NCIDQ Certificate holders whose personal and professional paths inspire us. We spoke with Tama Duffy Day, principal at Gensler, about her favorite interior design projects and her thoughts on NCIDQ Certification.

### The Joys of Healthcare Design

Tama focuses almost entirely on healthcare projects, as a Global Health and Wellness Leader in Gensler's Washington, DC office. "I love doing what I'm doing because I have an opportunity to really impact the health of people, the health of companies, and the health of our communities globally," she said.

When asked to describe one recent memorable project, Tama discussed a small but meaningful research project. Tama helped lead a team that designed a new reception, check-in and waiting area for Unity Health Care, a federally qualified health clinic in the Brentwood neighborhood of Washington, DC. The project was a joint partnership with Gensler, the fabric manufacturer Sunbrella and Unity Health Care.

Before the project began, the waiting room looked like "it hadn't been updated in some time, with confusion on where to check-in and a place that lacked color," according to Tama. "After the research and design intervention the space functioned more efficiently, was furnished with diverse and colorful furniture and looked like a place where you could get healthier, have meaningful conversations and engage with your community members," she said.

The design was entirely based on research, with thorough pre and post occupancy studies on the impact of the new waiting room on patient and staff satisfaction. People living in the neighborhood were also an important part of the collaborative design process. "We had a community fair where we invited the community in to make comments and to provide advice on how they wanted to pass their time while they were at the clinic. With this powerful content, we analyzed the content, completed observation studies, engaged textile and fiber artists, selected materials, products, finishes, lighting, color, and furniture, designed community inspired art and created a new healthy place," Tama said.

One significant community contribution to the space was a quilted wall of

### Tama Duffy Day

NCIDQ Certificate  
No. 6460, FACHE, FASID,  
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fabric-wrapped triangles. The patterns and colors were voted on by community members, and some of the triangles contain words of encouragement written by Brentwood residents, such as “love, peace, believe, grow.” By incorporating community feedback into the design, the health center builds trust with patients and ultimately improves health outcomes.

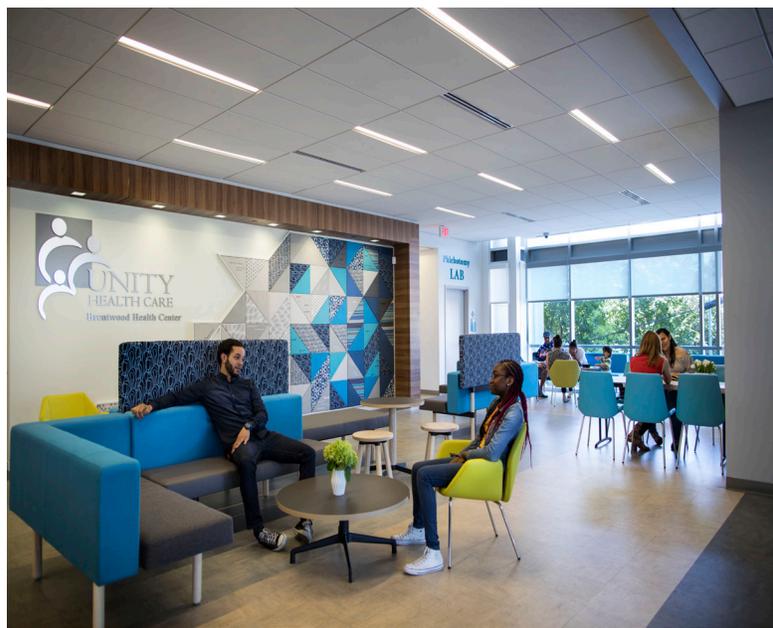
Tama does not focus on specific, small design choices. She seeks to lead teams and strategically engage clients in seeing how design impact their business. “I look at design as how something works, not just how it looks,” she said. Through over 35 years of experience, Tama has learned that design really impacts how we “live, work, play and heal.”

Currently, Tama is working on a 250,000 square foot new building for Cook Country Central Health Systems in Chicago. The modular design of the clinical exam rooms mean that specialists from different areas of medicine can use the same spaces, depending on their needs. “We brought natural light into as many places as possible, so that patients and staff both have access to natural light throughout the day,” Tama said.

### Why NCIDQ Certification Matters

Tama believes NCIDQ Certification is an important step in any interior designer’s career. She decided to take the NCIDQ Exam as soon as she was eligible after graduating from North Dakota State University. For Tama, this certificate was the “highest level of accreditation and recognition of design skills.” “Through NCIDQ, I’ve been able to engage with thoughtful, knowledgeable, passionate and giving people and professionals who are always willing to support the profession of interior design and to seek new ways of inspiring people both in the field and coming into the field to do great things,” she said.

Unity Health Care, Photo Credit: Sunbrella/Gensler



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