

MAY 2023

CONSTRUCTION IN

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"Physical safety, while critical to any construction project, cannot be the only component of a company's wellness strategy," writes Margaret Patricia Eaton. "By overlooking mental health concerns such as depression, work-related stress, and anxiety, the industry has sidestepped what may be one of the reasons it has difficulty attracting and retaining skilled trades."



Safety may indeed be top of mind for all ethical organizations in the construction space, but I think we've all been privy to the developing conversation that it may not be enough. A broader, more holistic approach to health and safety that includes mental health and wellness, addiction support, and suicide prevention is beneficial to both employees and their workplaces—and frankly speaking, it is needed.

"Apart from being the right thing to do from an ethical standpoint, caring for employees' health and well-being also makes sound economic sense," writes Margaret in this issue. "Numerous reports and studies... reveal a positive correlation between employee well-being, employee productivity, and company performance." Unfortunately, construction as a whole lags behind other sectors in mental health and wellness offerings; compounding the problem is that, for a breadth of reasons, many construction-sector employees may be reticent to access mental health services even when they are offered. A true paradigm shift is in order, and this issue's ***Health and Safety for Body and Mind – Workplace Wellness in Construction*** explores what that might look like.

Jaime McKee

Editor

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HEALTH AND SAFETY FOR BODY AND MIND

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Increasingly, the construction industry is embracing total human health, focusing on mind, body, and spirit when addressing wellness—but it hasn't always been this way.



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30 – 31 May, Winnipeg, MB

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For more information visit: bit.ly/41Nz0HF

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1 – 2 June, Vancouver, BC

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For more information visit: www.june23.rei.marcusevans-summits.com

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For more information visit: eswp.com/bridge/bridge-home

Are you planning an event relating to North America's growing Construction Industry?

To get your event listed in Construction in Focus, please contact us at least six to eight weeks before the event takes place at info@fmgpublishing.com or call 1-647-479-2163

NEW LIFE THROUGH MODULAR BRIDGES

America's roads and bridges have served the nation well over the decades, but are now at or even past their lifespans. Based in Parsippany, New Jersey, the Acrow Corporation has the solution: use modular steel bridges to keep cars and trucks moving.

For over 70 years, Acrow has dedicated itself to designing and manufacturing prefabricated modular components for bridges intended to be permanent, and others for emergencies, detours, military purposes, and other rapid response applications.

The company recently supplied two modular bridges to keep vehicles on the road during a key bridge replacement project on north-south Interstate 91 in Northampton, Massachusetts. J.F. White Contracting is responsible for replacing four structurally deficient bridges originally installed in 1965. "Acrow's

structures were installed on Interstate 91 to reduce inconvenience to motorists during a bridge renovation project on the heavily traveled route," stated the company on its website. "Because maintaining the route is so critical, the two temporary bridges were specified to accommodate heavy commercial and non-commercial traffic during the multi-year project."

Additionally, Acrow was also behind the installation of a temporary modular steel bridge structure at the junction of Autoroutes 520 and 13 in Montréal, Québec. "Autoroute 13 is a major north-south freeway in the Montréal urban region and the main link to Ville de Laval, the third-largest city in the province," stated the company. "At the interchange with Autoroute 520, the six-lane route is heavily traveled, making a rapid installation of the temporary structure a priority and Acrow's modular steel structure an ideal solution."

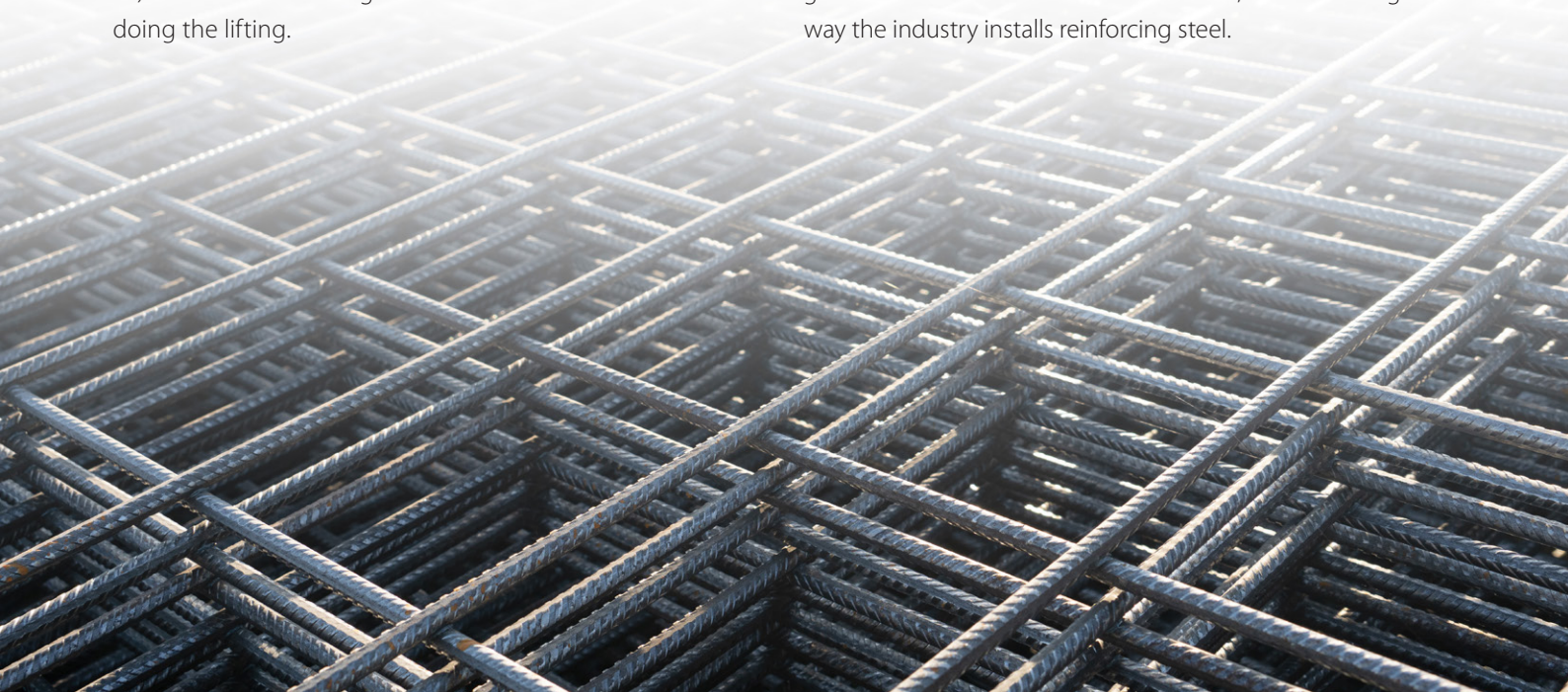
REBAR ROBOTS SPEED CONSTRUCTION

The aphorism 'time is money' is especially true in construction, where project delivery dates are critical. New technology like 3D printing is speeding up the building process to the point where what used to take months now requires just days. Now construction crews have another ally: robots that can reduce rebar installation times by 50 percent.

Advanced Construction Robotics (ACR), the company behind the rebar-tying TyBOT, recently launched IronBOT, able to lift, carry, and place rebar bundles weighing about 2,300 kg (5,070 lb.) in transverse or longitudinal orientation without humans doing the lifting.

Both IronBOT and TyBOT were used on Florida's Port St. Lucie West Boulevard Bridge project, working alongside bridge specialist Shelby Erectors, Inc. The project—initially estimated to take two weeks—was completed in just seven days. The pilot project saw IronBOT place 66,700 kg (147,048 lb.) of rebar, with TyBOT successfully completing 58,068 ties in 6.5 production shifts.

The IronBOT was launched earlier this year at CONEXPO. According to ACR, the combined IronBOT and TyBOT technologies will save time and construction costs, and will change the way the industry installs reinforcing steel.



BILLIONS NEEDED TO REPAIR U.S. DAMS: REPORT

Like America's roads and bridges, dams are aging and urgently in need of expensive rehabilitation, according to the Association of State Dam Safety Officials (ASDSO).

In April, the Association of State Dam Safety Officials (ASDSO) released its 21-page report, *The Cost of Rehabilitating Dams in the U.S.: A Methodology and Estimate*. According to data, the price tag to rehabilitate America's non-federal dams is \$157.5 billion, while the cost of rehabilitating solely critical dams is about \$34.1 billion. "These estimates were based on actual dam rehabilitation costs for non-federal dam repairs over the past ten years and estimated costs for known upcoming projects," states ASDSO in a media release. "It included nationwide cost data for more than 500 projects, including dam removals. Project costs ran from \$10,000 for small projects to more than \$500 million for large complex projects."

Despite the passing of President Joe Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Act two years ago—which has already seen more than 20,000 projects being awarded funding—the

ASDSO report reveals the urgent need for ongoing investment, stating, "The Act, which provided more than \$4 billion towards dam rehabilitation, is only a step towards adequately addressing the nation's backlog of dam rehabilitation projects."

At present, there are over 88,600 non-federal dams in the U.S., and the number of high-hazard potential dams, "where loss of life is probable should the dams fail," has gone up about 20 percent over the past decade, to more than 16,000. In America, approximately 65 percent of dams are privately owned, some 31 percent are held by federal, tribal, state, or local governments, and the remainder are owned by quasi-governmental utilities or have unknown ownership. According to the ASDSO, "Many dam owners cannot afford the high cost of dam rehabilitation and need grants and loans to rehabilitate their dams to reduce the risk of dam failures or serious incidents."

The Cost of Rehabilitating Dams in the U.S. report is available at dam-safety-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/files/2023%20ASDSO%20Costs%20of%20Dam%20Rehab%20Report.pdf.



MASS TIMBER PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE INSTALLED AT GEORGE BROWN COLLEGE'S LIMBERLOST PLACE

Constructing over 65 wood-based projects across North America in the past 20 years, PCL recently installed a new mass timber bridge at George Brown College's Limberlost Place.

Representing the college's commitment to sustainability in design and performance, the 10-storey Limberlost Place is the most recent addition to George Brown's Waterfront Campus. Located in Toronto's East Bayfront community, the new mass timber, zero-emissions project "will be the first institutional building of its kind in Ontario" when it opens in January 2025, according to the college.

The two-storey mass timber pedestrian bridge represents a milestone for the building-in-progress. Erected almost 20 metres (65 feet) above street level, the bridge links Limberlost Place's level five to level six, the future Daphne Cockwell Centre for Health Sciences.

For George Brown College, the new Limberlost Place is significant for many reasons, including the fact it will be open years ahead of Toronto's 2030 goals for sustainable design and performance for new developments. Made with Canadian mass-timber components, the structure has already become

"a global model for mass timber sustainable construction," according to the college.

The bridge's individual cross-laminated timber (CLT) pieces were made off-site then shipped to the college's location and built on-site, which took four days to assemble. The team then successfully took on the complex challenge of a one-day lift to put the bridge in place. "Thank you to all of our partners, consultants, and extraordinary tradespeople who have been integral in achieving this significant milestone. This accomplishment truly showcases the exemplary level of skill, and patience it takes to ensure everything goes according to plan," said Myke Badry, PCL Toronto's district manager, on the company's website. "Congratulations to the entire project team as we move one step closer to the completion of this revolutionary project that is setting a precedent in mass timber construction."

Made from two glue-laminated trusses and four CLT panels, the new bridge is 21.4 meters (70 feet) long. Comprising almost two dozen steel connecting plates and 241 steel dowels, the bridge weighed about 31 metric tonnes at the point of install. A video of the bridge being lifted into place is available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=pAPfAjOCm0M&t=4s.

HEALTH & SAFETY FOR BODY & MIND

Workplace Wellness in Construction

Increasingly, the construction industry is embracing total human health, focusing on mind, body, and spirit when addressing wellness—but it hasn't always been this way.

Written by Margaret Patricia Eaton

"Safety is our number one concern; we want everyone to go home in the same condition in which they arrived; safety is a way of life here." These sentiments are frequently shared by construction industry leaders, and there's no doubting their sincerity: they back

up their words with robust safety programs and strict protocols for reviewing safety procedures at the start of each day, all successful measures in preventing injury. But physical safety, while critical to any construction project, cannot be the only component of a company's wellness strategy. ➤



► A high-risk industry

By overlooking mental health concerns such as depression, work-related stress, and anxiety, the industry has sidestepped what may be one of the reasons it has difficulty attracting and retaining skilled trades. These issues may also explain why workers are not always as productive as their managers would like, as they strive to complete projects on budget and on time while white knuckling their way through.

Most troubling, issues of “mental” wellness may explain why suicide rates within construction rank so high against comparable occupations.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the construction industry, which for statistical purposes includes oil and gas and mining extraction industries, has the second highest rate of suicide in the U.S. at 53.3 per 100,000 workers, second only to the agriculture, forestry, and fisheries sector. Notably, these industries share some similarities, in that the workforces of all are male-dominated and the work is physically demanding and often performed in isolation.

To put it in context, the suicide rate for construction workers is over four times higher than the national suicide average and five times higher than all construction deaths combined, a clear indication that, although physical safety programs are working, the industry is plagued by serious mental health issues.

The reasons for these statistics are complex. First, there’s the nature of the work: high-risk, demanding, deadline-driven, and sometimes isolating—frequently in remote locations, away from family and friend networks.

Then there’s the composition of the workforce, which is still dominated by men, who statistically have always faced a higher risk for suicide than women. Data released by the CDC in 2015 indicates that, within the industry, male suicide rates (49.4 per 100,000 workers) are twice as high as female suicide rates (25.5 per 100,000 workers). Both rates are alarmingly high.

Higher male suicide rates in the general population have long been attributed in part to a culture which reinforces and rewards stoicism and strength in young males and admonishes that “boys don’t cry” while equating seeking help for emotional issues with a sign of weakness. Those ideas may be even more prevalent in the construction industry, where being “a tough guy who can handle it,” is the perceived norm and where women, to be accepted, have to fit into that culture.

Exacerbating the problem is that a percentage of the workforce is composed of armed forces veterans who may have untreated PTSD. Another issue is that a percentage of workers, perhaps after suffering work-related injuries, are dependent on pain-relieving medications, resulting in substance abuse and its consequences.

Added to those concerns is the organization of the industry itself, which is split between salaried, full-time office employees and hourly field employees who are often affiliated with labour unions. This can create a disconnect when the industry attempts to effect change across the culture and move toward one that is concerned about the totality of its workers’ health from a holistic viewpoint.





Totality of health

Of course, this is something that other industries—the financial, retail, and manufacturing sectors for example—have been doing since the 1980s when the wellness movement first gained traction.

Apart from being the right thing to do from an ethical standpoint, caring for employees' health and well-being also makes sound economic sense as these industries have discovered for themselves, evidenced in numerous reports and studies which reveal a positive correlation between employee well-being, employee productivity, and company performance.

The Construction Financial Management Association (CFMA) took a leadership position on these issues as early as 2014, publishing "Mental Illness and Suicide: Break the Silence & Create a Caring Culture," which explored topics of mental health awareness, opioid and addiction recovery, and suicide prevention. Other professional organizations have since followed CFMA's lead, while CFMA continues to address these topics.

In an Oct 2020 article, "Mental Health & Well-being in the Construction Workplace" in **CFMA Building Profits Magazine**, Cal Beyer argues that "a contractor's most important resource, and one of its leading costs, is its employees. By actively investing in employee, supervisory, and leadership development programs, CFMs can expect a positive ROI and other measurable outcomes in both their risk management and human capital investments. This intentional strategy combines organizational development practices to leverage human capital risk management and protect a company's bottom line."

It appears, however, that company managers, labour unions, and even trade training programs have been slow to catch up. In 2021, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) Foundation's

Center for Workplace Mental Health conducted a 20-question survey on mental health in the construction industry and reported data from 1,175 respondents across the U.S. It concluded that "the results suggest that concern for mental health is high, but willingness to discuss mental health at work is low."

Some key findings were that 93 percent of all survey respondents (presidents, CEOs, and owners) recognize that addressing mental health is a sound business practice, with 77 percent saying it was prioritized at work. However, when asked if workers were likely to access mental health care, only 26 percent indicated they believed workers would, whereas nearly half did not know and nearly a third said workers were unlikely to do so.

The same low numbers apply to whether workers would discuss issues with supervisors or colleagues, with only 17 percent saying they would discuss them with a supervisor and 18 percent with a colleague. This is in sharp contrast to a similar public poll conducted by APA the same year, which indicated that nearly 56 percent of workers in other sectors would be comfortable discussing mental health issues with their supervisors or colleagues.

The report also offers the top four reasons why construction industry workers, according to those polled, were reticent about seeking help: shame and stigma (78 percent); fear of judgement by peers (77 percent); fear of negative consequences (55 percent); and not knowing how or where to access care (46 percent).

The report concludes: "As the construction industry works to improve health and safety, including mental health and well-being, this report sheds light on important areas to focus on to overcome challenges in the workforce." ►

► Developing a framework

The report suggests a framework for wellness begins when an organization “institutes a collective mindset for well-being as part of a respectful workplace committed to equity and social justice, which accepts mental health as a diversity and inclusion opportunity.”

It’s vitally important, they say, for senior leadership to communicate with empathy and “build a caring culture that embraces well-being by incorporating mental health awareness, substance use and addiction recovery, and suicide prevention into safety, health, wellness, employee benefits, and employee / employer relations.”

But how do leaders make this paradigm shift, even as they recognize the importance of doing so, when they themselves are a product of a culture that for too long has ignored the mind / body / spirit connection? For many whose intentions are good, it is still a foreign concept.

On March 30, 2022, however, the Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) took a bold step toward normalizing the concept of a “caring culture that embraces wellness” when it announced a collaborative partnership with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) that will provide company leaders with the tools to take on this job throughout the U.S. construction industry.

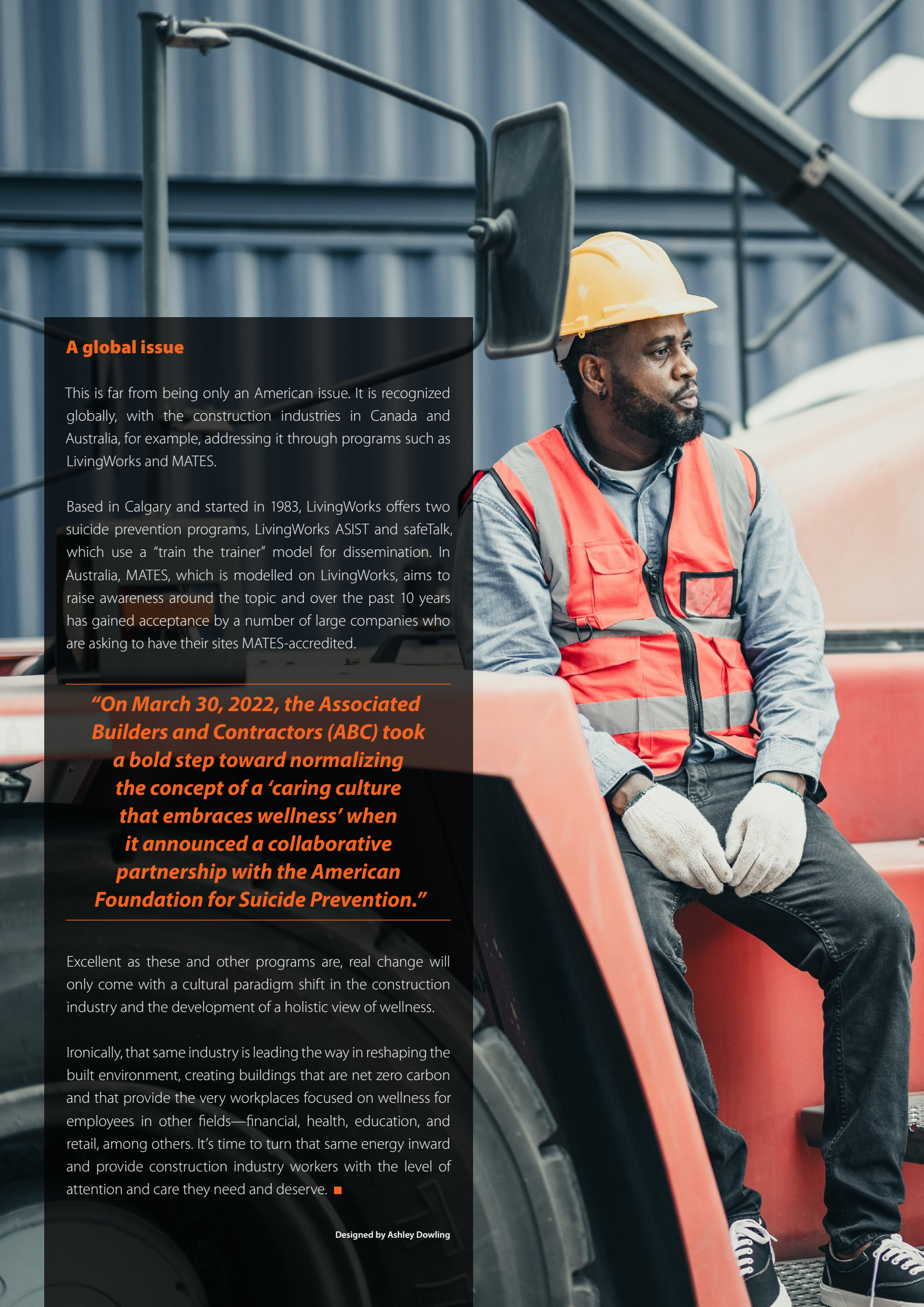
The partnership will draw on the AFSP’s expertise to develop and disseminate educational resources on mental health and suicide prevention in workplaces so that company leadership will understand what needs to be done, and so that the 46 percent of the workforce who said they did not know how to access information will now be able to do so.

The team will also participate in key events where worker safety and health, and the development of safety and health practitioners, is addressed; provide practitioners with relevant information; and share opportunities about supportive programs and events with the ABC’s 69 chapters and AFSP chapters in every state.

“Safety includes total human health—emotional, mental, intellectual, occupational, and spiritual wellness—and we must continue to raise the bar for safety in the construction workforce of more than 7.5 million,” said Greg Sizemore, ABC Vice President of Health, Safety, Environment, and Workforce Development, as shared in a news release.

“Our people are our greatest assets, and this partnership will take our total human health and safety practices to the next level. Going forward, this is the greatest opportunity to leverage and advance world-class safety for our people, both physically and mentally,” said Sizemore.



A full-page background image of a Black male construction worker with a beard, wearing a yellow hard hat, an orange high-visibility safety vest over a grey long-sleeved shirt, and white work gloves. He is sitting on a red piece of construction machinery, looking off to the side with a thoughtful expression. The background shows more of the machinery and a blue sky.

A global issue

This is far from being only an American issue. It is recognized globally, with the construction industries in Canada and Australia, for example, addressing it through programs such as LivingWorks and MATES.

Based in Calgary and started in 1983, LivingWorks offers two suicide prevention programs, LivingWorks ASIST and safeTalk, which use a “train the trainer” model for dissemination. In Australia, MATES, which is modelled on LivingWorks, aims to raise awareness around the topic and over the past 10 years has gained acceptance by a number of large companies who are asking to have their sites MATES-accredited.

“On March 30, 2022, the Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) took a bold step toward normalizing the concept of a ‘caring culture that embraces wellness’ when it announced a collaborative partnership with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.”

Excellent as these and other programs are, real change will only come with a cultural paradigm shift in the construction industry and the development of a holistic view of wellness.

Ironically, that same industry is leading the way in reshaping the built environment, creating buildings that are net zero carbon and that provide the very workplaces focused on wellness for employees in other fields—financial, health, education, and retail, among others. It’s time to turn that same energy inward and provide construction industry workers with the level of attention and care they need and deserve. ■

Building *for* Prosperity

OVERCOMING THE HOUSING CRISIS

Written by Jessica Ferlaino

Real estate, when developed thoughtfully in concert with policies and standards that uphold sound principles of design and function, plays a vital role in building prosperous economies and vibrant communities. It is also subject, however, to the laws of supply and demand, which certainly complicate how the market functions.

Housing is now a commodity, which contradicts its core function as a recognized international human right. As housing stock is in short supply and demand remains high, prices have been driven through the roof, which has implications for home ownership, rental costs, and availability, worsening the housing crisis across North America.

In Canada and the United States, there's a strong desire amongst residents to own a home and as a result, a significant percentage of wealth is tied to real estate assets. At the peak of the subprime mortgage crisis in 2006/2007 which led to the fallout of the global financial crisis, real estate represented 6.7 percent of the U.S. gross domestic product (GDP).

When interest rates were cut in 2020, residential investment represented nearly a tenth of Canada's gross domestic product (GDP). While this number has decreased, it remains higher than the crisis levels experienced by the U.S. and while it may seem like the perfect storm is brewing, the Canadian market is far more insulated than its neighbours to the south.

While market corrections like the one that took place in the U.S. are always looming, meaning Canada is never immune to crisis, the same level of fallout isn't likely to take place as there are marked differences in how the respective markets operate. Canada's market is better insulated thanks to more stringent lending practices, tighter borrowing requirements, and stricter rules about housing developments and house-flipping. Land transfer taxes and other rules limit developers' ability to freely develop multiple properties at a time and offer greater market stability.

Further, Canadian mortgage interest is not tax-deductible, rendering little tax advantage to holding large mortgages, as is





the case in the U.S. where policies were developed to encourage home ownership amongst all classes, including low-income Americans via subprime lending, which ultimately led to the crisis.

There's more to it, though. A 2021 Scotiabank study found that Canada has the fewest housing units per head of any G7 country, with two-thirds of the nation's housing shortage in Ontario alone. This shortage is one of the biggest threats to stability so development needs urgently to be encouraged to meet the population's needs—which the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) estimated to be 3.5 million additional housing units by 2030.

To make matters worse, it's a market dominated by investors. During the pandemic, one in four residential properties in Ontario was owned by investors, and when it comes to

investors, real estate investment trusts (REITs) are some of the biggest players in this space. As of October 2022, the nine leading Canadian REITs had a combined market capitalization of \$50 billion CAD, an indication of the role these investors play in the real estate market and the value and profit that can be unlocked.

As Ontario is ground zero for most of Canada's housing shortage, the government has invested resources to better understand ►

"As housing stock is in short supply and demand remains high, prices have been driven through the roof, which has implications for home ownership, rental costs, and availability."



“With better policies, procedures, and planning, the development and redevelopment of properties and land could work to create rich, vibrant communities where the needs of the entirety of the population are met.”

► the market’s needs. The Ontario Housing Affordability Task Force consulted with stakeholders to get a better sense of why home prices have more than tripled in ten years and what can be done to address supply issues.

As it stands, Ontario needs to build 1.5 million homes over the next ten years to address the supply shortage. Further to this, the Task Force identified that both land and infrastructure in the province could be used more effectively, as there

is a great deal of underused or redundant commercial and industrial space.

From a legislative standpoint, many policy changes can be made to kickstart development in a way that serves both developers and the community. Amendments could be made to the Planning Act; zoning requirements could be modernized to make better use of land; and better incentives would encourage investments.



Currently, of 35 OECD countries, Canada is second to last (to the Slovak Republic) in the time it takes to approve building projects. The process is complex and time-consuming and as we know, time is money. This is especially true of real estate developments.

According to a 2020 study by BILD, every month a low-rise project is delayed amounts to \$1.46 per square foot more in costs that are passed along. An easy way to simplify the process would be to digitize it and reduce the red tape to expedite development, as long as this is not done at the expense of accountability.

The red tape, in this case, includes lengthy, complicated application and appeals processes, material and building restrictions, the need for updated taxation laws and new funding models, and the high costs of doing business (materials and labour account for only half of the overall costs, with land, government, and development fees making up the rest).

Done right, real estate development can rejuvenate communities, but this doesn't always happen. However, with better policies, procedures, and planning, the development and redevelopment of properties and land could work to create rich, vibrant communities where the needs of the entirety of the population are met. New residential development is often followed by commercial development—the shops and infrastructure, services and support that are required by any community to thrive, which leads to increased employment, additional growth, and a bump in prosperity.

It's clear that development is an important part of the equation when it comes to growth, but it needs to be done in a way that's thought through and meaningful to ensure that it harmonizes with local objectives and needs. If it's sustainable design using environmentally friendly materials, even better. ■

Designed by Ebic Tristary



FBM

architecture
interior design
planning



PEOPLE-DRIVEN design



Written by William Young

Architecture, interior design, and planning firm FBM of Halifax, Nova Scotia has been operating for over a century, and according to Design Director Susan Fitzgerald, it has always had people who are interested in shaping the city of Halifax and in creating appealing spaces.

The company is best known for local projects like the Halifax Central Library, which Planning Lead Kieron Hunt describes as the project that redefined the landscape for what community engagement and design could be for the city and became a springboard for the company's successes in turn.

The firm also gained attention through projects like the Richmond Yards mixed-use development, one of the largest of its kind in Atlantic Canada. Fitzgerald adds that the company continues to complete many projects—including schools and health care facilities, and key buildings in various communities—that have significant social value.

In the last two decades, company growth has catapulted the firm to recognition both in Atlantic Canada and around the world. Hunt describes FBM as always thinking ahead, as the company sets the stage of a project so that designers can ►►



PAVING THE WAY FOR THE FUTURE OF CAPE BRETON - UNAMA'KI

Five historic projects to transform the way we deliver and access healthcare, improve care for seniors, and drive innovation through post-secondary education.



New Waterford Community Hub

New Waterford and the surrounding area will have a new, modern health centre, a 60-bed long-term care home, community wellness centre, new recreational fields, and a new, modern school, creating a community hub.



Cape Breton Regional Hospital

A major expansion of the Cape Breton Regional Hospital in Sydney will include a new Cancer Centre, Energy Centre, and Clinical Services Building that will house a variety of new departments and services.



Nova Scotia Community College

The Sydney Waterfront Campus of the Nova Scotia Community College will have a modern design, open spaces, state-of-the-art technology, a dynamic learning environment, and be built to accessibility and environmental standards.



Northside Health Complex

Northside CBRM residents will have a new, modern health centre and a 60-bed long-term care home. Both will be built in the Northside Business Park, along with a new laundry centre. The project also includes 12 short-stay beds.



Glace Bay Hospital

Glace Bay Hospital will see renovations to the emergency department, surgical suites, and medical device reprocessing (MDR) that will increase space by an estimated 30% and include the newly opened Tom Peach Renal Dialysis Clinic.

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► be free to design what and when they need to, with all pre-development market feasibility and approvals taken care of. The firm also occupies a unique niche with respect to its use of market analysis to bring together community voices, so architects and interior designers can be informed of the project's touch points with the broader community as it relates to supply and demand forces.

FBM works across Atlantic Canada with architecture and interior design as core services. Its planning wing works across North America, the larger reach allowing the team to gain more exposure to industry trends and best practices. FBM also works with architecture firms around the world and has learned that the process is far more beneficial and seamless when planning and market analysis is involved from the beginning—and it looks to claim this space.

FBM is most interested in answering the question, 'How does a space become a place?' Even down to elements like the appearance of a site, its sounds, and its smell, a building can resonate with people in myriad ways and stick in someone's memory for a very long time. This means that the surrounding environments are integral to the work FBM does, from planning to design.

"The company follows a credo of people-driven design, a view based on listening to different points of view."

With projects like Hope Blooms—a Halifax-based youth non-profit—or planter benches on Gottingen Street, elements of mental health awareness, environmental stewardship, and Indigenous reconciliation come into play when designing safe places and communities that have value for all users.

"We realize the connection to the environment that our buildings have," Hunt explains, and FBM is also aware of the effect that has had on Nova Scotia's Main Streets. The company takes great pride in how it shapes the urban environment and wants to remain sensitive to it. "The spaces between and around buildings are as important as the building themselves," he adds.

The company follows a credo of people-driven design, an approach based on listening to different points of view. When designing a building like a school or educational institute, the firm will listen to what the target audience wants but will also seek out different perspectives from a broad array of groups. Fitzgerald explains that the social value of a building is heavily considered during this design process, meaning whether a building is economically and/or environmentally sustainable.

Over the past decade, the nature and role of public engagement and consultation in design and planning have changed considerably. As a result, the input that people and organizations can give has magnified and has become essential to community engagement and outreach programs.

“Everything that we design must be reflective and supportive of a community’s values [and] allow for creativity and consultation,” Hunt adds. People-driven design captures how FBM works: simultaneously internally and externally with other groups, to create a successful project. The firm’s work with the Saint John City Market Strategic Plan involved a great many voices working with a historic property and is an example of how diverse voices from the community ultimately led to a stronger final product.

FBM’s involvement in its local community goes beyond the physical projects. Susan Fitzgerald is an associate professor at Dalhousie University’s School of Architecture and is involved in research that aims to benefit the company and its industry. This includes coming to a greater understanding of what learning spaces, health care centers, and spaces for wellness and dwelling mean in a community. Fitzgerald and the firm are engaging in various research projects alongside clients to develop buildings, and this is key to its operations. ►



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“For more than a decade, Altus Group has provided FBM with dependable and accurate cost estimating services that have contributed to the success of their projects.” - FBM



► There is also ongoing research in Atlantic Canada looking into mass timber construction, a newer form of building design that is seeing increased interest from clients but little initiative to begin. To help spur it forward, the company is dipping its toe into mass timber and is building its new Halifax office as a mass timber project, which Fitzgerald affirms is going very well. The project is developing interest thanks to ongoing studies by FBM and Atlantic WoodWORKS!, a local non-profit looking to expand the use of regionally produced wood products. The non-profit is looking to measure the embodied carbon of the projects to understand how mass timber construction stacks up against concrete or steel.

The crew at FBM is excited about the move to the new office and is pleased for the new location in Halifax's North End, where it can be a part of a community with which it has worked in the past.



There are many exciting opportunities afoot in the building and design spaces, but Hunt admits that there are economic challenges across North America. However, projects are continuing in the face of this, especially as Atlantic Canada's population continues to grow. He sees a lot of provincial support for health care and a big drive toward increasing the number of health care facilities and beds, so the company will remain active in that sector. On a residential level, the team is looking to provide both affordable and market housing and to develop housing opportunities throughout the region, which is an ongoing challenge. Fitzgerald notes that Nova Scotia is being looked at more as a destination, so there is a possibility that more projects along the coast or close to historic sites will be of increasing importance in future.

The company is also currently scheduled to be a part of the 18th International Architecture Exhibition in Venice—also





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known as the Venice Biennale—alongside Architects Against Housing Alienation, a Canadian group looking at different strategies for housing people well and for the long term. This contingent will be further supported by Nova Scotian activist Eric Johnson, Coordinator for the Halifax-based homeless assistance program Navigator Street Outreach.

***"FBM is most interested in
answering the question, 'How
does a space become a place?'"***

Hunt adds that the firm, in partnership with the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities, planned the inaugural Nova Scotia Main Streets Ideas Exchange, which is a conference to bring communities and organizations from across Atlantic Canada together to share ideas and rediscover the value of smaller main streets in communities.

"Bringing together groups is consistent with our people-driven design," Hunt affirms, and both the company's 2023 calendar and its goals are indicative that this idea will be at the front of the firm's mind for a long time to come. ■

Content Developed by Erin McWhinney

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Written by Claire Suttles

President AJ Slivinski took over ownership of Mayfield Management Group Ltd., now Zen Residential Ltd. in 2016 after decades of entrepreneurship and business experience, including many years in the food industry managing both a domestic and North American portfolio, building a major gaming operation in Canada, and a world-class contact centre in Cyprus. "In three years, the contact centre went from two people to 127 people, 12 different languages, a 24/7 operation," he remembers. "In our fifth year we became the number one contact centre in the world in customer service, beating out FedEx and Carnival Cruise Lines in the final. It was quite a journey and quite an achievement to do something in an established industry and to become number one in the world." ►►





► While building businesses, Slivinski began investing in real estate in the early 2000s, buying condominiums across Canada then eventually selling them when apartment complexes presented a better opportunity. He retired at 45, moved to the sunny shores of Panama with his wife, and wrote a book titled ***The Leadership Code*** which explores the successful strategies he implemented when building the world's number one contact centre. But the lure of real estate soon drew him back to Alberta.

"I thought, 'I need to get back into the industry.' I have a passion for real estate. I have a passion for buying, selling and managing apartment buildings."

Slivinski returned to his home province of Alberta armed with the experience and insight needed to shake up the industry. "The property management industry is very lethargic," he says. "It's very complacent, very antiquated, and heavily paper-based. Since I came from a background of online marketing with the gaming industry, I thought if I went out and bought a property management company in Edmonton that maybe I could be a disruptor. Maybe I could go in and completely shake up the market, bring technology to the industry, and disrupt the industry with that technology, understanding how and where tenants were currently and where the future was going to be with tenants. And not only tenants, but with all customers."

He made good on his vision in 2016 when he bought Mayfield Management Group Ltd., which had managed some of his apartment complexes in the past. He made the acquisition

"with the sole intention of trying to disrupt the industry with the formula I used in Cyprus to build a world-class contact centre." To do so, he focused on three core areas: people, processes, and technology, all of which are connected.

"The processes are developed by great people," Slivinski says, "and technology is the accelerator of great processes." While all three areas are critical, people stand out as irreplaceable. "Both processes and technology can be copied, but it's the people that can't be copied."

"Zen Residential offers a full suite of services that will be invaluable to developers as they navigate this completely different terrain."

These irreplaceable people who make up the team hit the ground running after the acquisition. One of the first goals to tackle was to make a dramatic transition from a paper-based system to a digital one. This proved a major effort that came with more than a few challenges.

"They were the typical paper-based company," Slivinski says of Mayfield Management Group when he bought it. "So we needed to change software and start to move toward the cloud. We were trying to position ourselves in the marketplace [to be] the technology leader. Today Zen Residential is completely cloud-based—the entire tenant journey and life cycle, right from when they first find us until the time they exit, is completely paperless. We have created our own proprietary digital tracking and paperless system call RRSN (Resident Retention Management System). The application process is digital. The signing of the lease is digital, the move-ins and move-outs are digital. The entire process is augmented with a series of drip campaigns to keep in constant contact with renters throughout the renter lifecycle," he explains.

After becoming a technology leader within the industry, the team is ready to take on its next challenge. "We're pivoting," Slivinski says. "The industry here in Edmonton—major property management companies—all built their business on what we call the stick-built 1960s, 1970s walk-up 20-unit apartment buildings in the downtown core. And today's industry is changing and evolving. The new phase of the industry is what we call purpose-built apartment buildings. These are Class A, brand new apartment buildings that are almost like resorts."

The trend has been steadily gaining momentum for over a decade, largely because these resort-like complexes provide the amenities and community residents want. "The purpose-built ►



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Team Photo

► buildings that we are seeing really started in the U.S. about 10 or 15 years ago,” Slivinski explains. “They have full gyms, a demo kitchen, yoga studios, bocce ball, pickle ball, dog runs, barbecues, heated walkways, fireplaces. They’ve got the full gamut.”

These apartment communities appeal to multiple generations. “They’re catering to Millennials who are not in a rush to buy a home or can’t afford a home with today’s interest rates, as well as Baby Boomers who are done raising kids,” Slivinski says. “They’re leaving the suburbs and moving to these purpose-built apartment buildings, not having to tie up all of their capital in a new purchase of a home. They’re using that to live on and they’re getting their community and their social connections through these purpose-built buildings.”

Developers have proven eager participants in the growing trend as the industry evolves. “These purpose-built apartment buildings are being built by the old developers that were building condos over the last 20 or 30 years,” Slivinski says. “Obviously the condo market has dried up, and so now they’re moving into these purpose-built apartment buildings.”

The team is eager to embrace this new direction completely. “Zen Residential has taken a position of being at the forefront of a cutting-edge technology-based property management company. We’re shedding our MMG legacy positioning and reputation of managing the old stick-build city buildings, and placing ourselves in the forefront of helping these condo developers build these new purpose-built apartments,” Slivinski shares.

The concept “is completely different than building a condo and selling it and moving on to the next condo building. These are buy and hold assets.”

Zen Residential offers a full suite of services that will be invaluable to developers as they navigate this completely different terrain. “We can actually do the branding for these developers,” says Slivinski. “We can do the logo design, the website design, the complete SEO, lease-up and marketing, as well as the property and asset management. And we offer consulting services upfront. Before these developers even put in their request for their development permit, we’re helping them.”

The company's list of services goes on, including "consulting on the design of the floor plate where the offices should be, where tenant traffic should flow for move-in and move-out, amenity design, technology stack, and all other operational designs." These services are an exciting new direction for the company. "Mayfield itself has been around for over 32 years, but our next chapter with our new name Zen Residential is to focus on Class A assets and help developers build and manage investments," Slivinski says.

"Today Zen Residential is completely cloud-based—the entire tenant journey and life cycle, right from when they first find us until the time they exit, is completely paperless."

These decisions are complex and everchanging for developers. The stakes are high. Like renters, they want peace of mind when choosing a partner. Renters want to go home after a long day at work and just relax hassle-free. This was genesis of the name Zen Residential.

The company is making some major shifts in order to give these assets the time and attention they deserve. Slivinski just merged his condominium division with Blueprint Condominium Management Inc., another Alberta-based condominium property management company. The merger "will now allow me to focus 100 percent of my time and effort on the apartment side and the single-family side of the business," he says.

After taking an already seasoned company to the next level, Slivinski and his dedicated team are well prepared to oversee the upcoming plans to fruition. The technology is already in place and the team is eager to use their industry experience to lead the market in an exciting, new direction. ■

Content Developed by Erin McWhinney

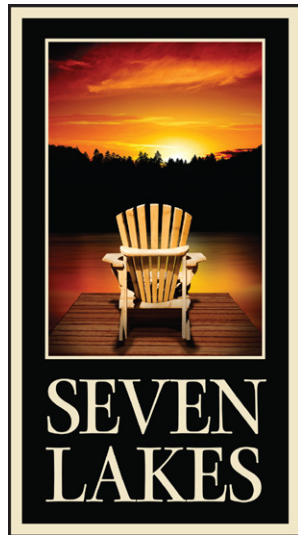


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BUILDING COMMUNITY

With Beautiful Homes





Written by Allison Dempsey

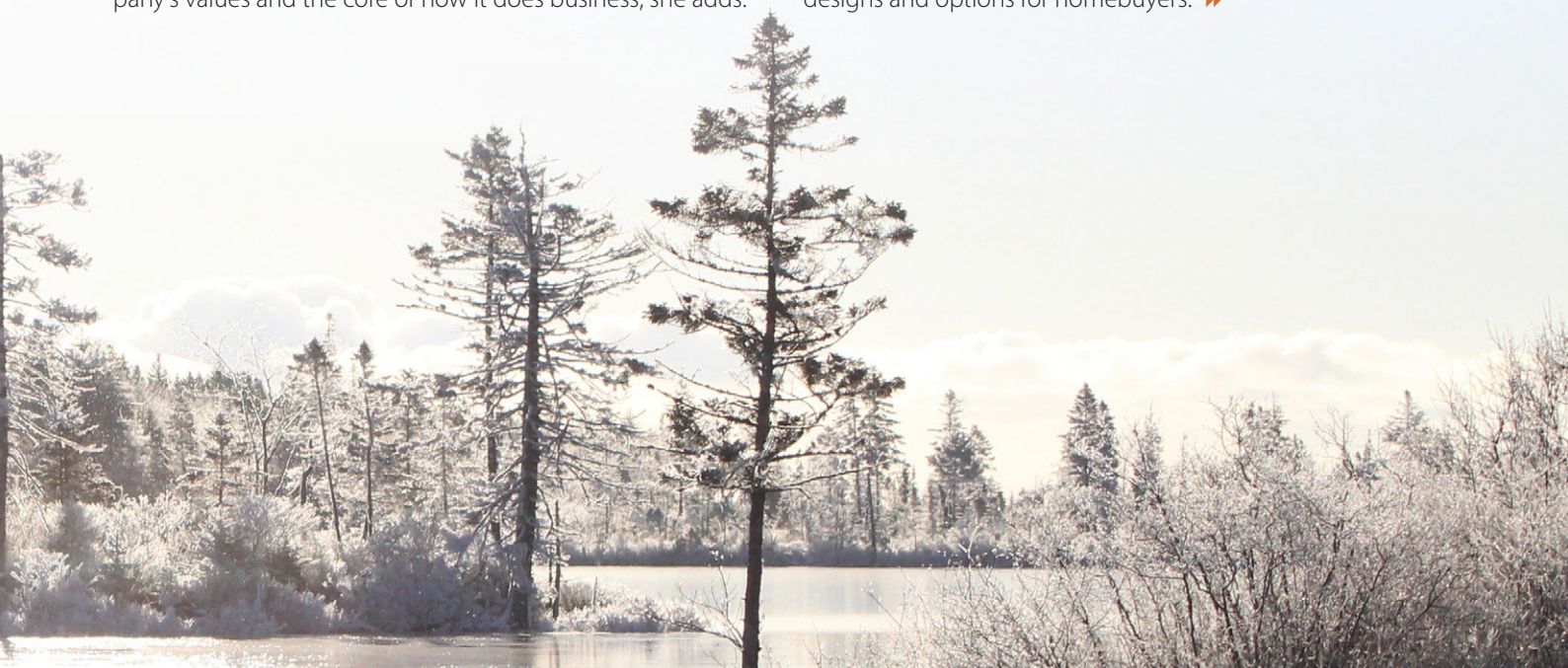
Taking pride in a reputation for integrity, reliable partnerships, and sound business decisions, St. John's, Newfoundland-based Penney Group shares strong fundamental principles with its partners, coupled with steadfast dedication to employees, customers, and communities. Founded 40 years ago by Ches Penney, the company is involved in a wide range of real estate developments that offer quality design, environmental awareness, and a commitment to building community.

"Penney Group as a whole has always had a very excellent reputation in Atlantic Canada," says Nicole Perchard, Director of Real Estate and Communications.

Ches Penney's lasting legacy as a fair and trusted man and a "really great partner in business," has been the basis of the company's values and the core of how it does business, she adds.

"As a whole, Penney Group has always been very generous, and we've always believed in building communities and giving back," she says. "That belief is still very strongly ingrained in everything we do. We support various causes and do whatever we can do to give back to the communities we're building in and the communities as a whole."

One of those communities, Seven Lakes Developments, is a perfect example. This master-planned "Conservation Designed" community—now under construction on land surrounding one of seven lakes inside the established community of Porters Lake—is situated on Nova Scotia's Eastern Shore, 25 minutes from downtown Halifax. Made up of several "Villages" connected by paths that encourage locals to get outside and appreciate nature and their surroundings via walks, hikes, and bike rides, the development offers a wide selection of home designs and options for homebuyers. ►►





▶“With regards to services offered in Seven Lakes, it’s basically building communities for people,” says Perchard.

This commitment is reflected in the planning. Comprising 634 acres, this conservation community dedicates 60 percent of the land retained to green space. “We’re very, very conscious of existing watercourses and ensuring we’re working with the land,” says Perchard. “We try not to clear cut any of our lots, and we leave as many mature trees as possible.”

Designed to be a place to live “from cradle to grave,” phase one of this all-inclusive master-planned community is almost complete, with fewer than ten of its 100 lots left. Now in the midst of waiting for approvals for phase two, the goal is to be ready to have a home built there by next spring.

“Phase one was great, it was a unique project,” Perchard says. “It took us a little bit longer to get to where we are now but it’s truly unique. And we’re hoping to bring that same uniqueness into phase two with a lot of green and a lot of space.”

“Made up of several ‘Villages’ connected by paths that encourage locals to get outside and appreciate their surroundings via walks, hikes, and bike rides, the development offers a wide selection of home designs and a number of prestigious home builders.”

Phase two is planned to have no homes on the main street, and will all back onto green space in cul-de-sacs. “That will give a real feeling of privacy that you don’t get in some of the other developments in Halifax Regional Municipality,” she adds.

Contributing to that development of a picturesque community where convenience coexists with nature is also a top priority for Penney Group member Synergy Homes, a company building houses that combine premium components with practical design. Currently building at Seven Lakes and Osprey Landing Nova Scotia, this partnership remains dedicated to preserving natural beauty while providing quality design and structures.

The company also offers a diverse range of homes, from under 1200 square feet to over 3,000 square feet, depending on the client’s needs. “From the beginning to the very end, we work on the plan, we help [clients] we get a sense of what they want for the finishes,” Perchard says. “We give



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them realistic allowances to align with the finishes they want. It really does vary, depending on the customer."

While the company's homebuilding division takes care of the building the homes, the heavy civil division is responsible for digging foundations and building roads, among other elements. "Synergy has actually grown quite a bit, mostly in our heavy civil division, which has been pretty exciting," Perchard says. "That division is actually growing so greatly that we may be able to potentially offer services to other developers and other builders."

Osprey Landing is a new development located in Lantz, Nova Scotia, and boasts 135 lots in the first phase with plans to break ground on the first semi-detached homes in June. With a wide variety of options including townhouses, link homes, large single-family, and semi-detached, there will be something for everyone. That includes the company's ongoing commitment to sustainability, which factors into each area of planning and development.

"With regards to building energy-efficient and sustainable homes, we definitely go a little bit above and beyond what the code is," says Perchard. "We definitely have a standard we try to keep." ►►





► The company's first passive solar home is also currently under construction, with much of the work being done by Synergy itself. "It's been exciting because we've really seen that this is something we could offer people, and not a lot of builders in Nova Scotia can offer that," Perchard says. "That in itself is very exciting. And Seven Lakes is a conservation community in itself, geared toward sustainability and more a place to live, not just a place to exist."

When it comes to home construction, the company also goes above and beyond, using extra insulation as a standard, creating beautiful custom closets, and working with suppliers to give clients excellent experiences they may not get elsewhere, she adds.

"We try our best to be responsive and work with our clients as much as possible. If they bring us [an idea] halfway through the build, we're never going to be the builder that says, 'No, you can't do that because it wasn't originally in your contract,'"

Perchard says. “We will find a way to work with the person to incorporate it as best we can.”

Along with its several homebuilding developments within Nova Scotia, Penney Group also has another arm of business—Our Homestead Rentals—located in Porters Lake and Enfield. With a housing crisis hovering over the country, particularly in the rental division, Penney Group is conscious of making a difference there as well to supplement market.

“The pandemic really caused a bit of a stir in the real estate market in Nova Scotia, because a lot of people were moving from Ontario back home east,” says Perchard. “It caused a real supply and demand issue and we saw housing prices soar hundreds of thousands of dollars over what they would have been a couple years before. We’re still seeing that now. The market has definitely changed from what it was maybe five years ago to now.”

“We’re always looking at opportunities to build more homes for people, as everyone deserves a home to feel safe, happy and comfortable in.”

The building industry as a whole has experienced supply and demand issues over the past few years, she adds, along with “huge increases” in pricing that the company either would have to absorb or pass on to its clients. “We still stayed strong,” she says. “We built more homes since the pandemic started than we ever had before.” Learning ways to make the process more efficient and ensure projects moved along as fast as possible was both a challenge and an accomplishment.

Other achievements include Synergy Homes’ nomination for a Canadian Homebuilding Association Award this past February, one of only two Atlantic Canadian companies selected. As for future goals, growth is definitely in the plans, with ongoing expansion within Nova Scotia and the search for more development opportunities. As for the team’s current projects, major milestones include completing phase one of Seven Lakes, starting phase two, and looking at other opportunities for remaining lands, including Osprey Landing.

“We also want to grow our rental group because we know there’s a need in Nova Scotia,” Perchard says. “We’re always looking at opportunities to build more homes for people, as everyone deserves a home to feel safe, happy and comfortable in.”

Penney Group is determined to leave their development areas better than they found them, creating spaces that are

aesthetically and environmentally aware while providing more than a place for customers to merely “exist.”

“We have taken great care to understand our customers’ needs and how they think of their homes and their neighbourhoods. It costs nothing to save a tree,” Perchard says. “That tree has existed for much longer than we have. It’s not difficult to carefully plan where you’re going to place a home, and really give it care and thought.”

Indeed, that seems to be the overarching theme for this team, who strive to be community builders while creating spaces of beauty.

“We want to build communities, not just places,” says Perchard. “We want to build beautiful areas where people are happy to live. We also want to make sure that we’re not only giving back to the community financially or giving our time, but also creating enduring places that people will be proud of.” ■

Content Developed by Erin McWhinney





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**FROM THE
GROUND UP**



Written by Pauline Müller

Contrary to contemporary wisdom that preaches finding riches in the niches, Nelson + Pope has turned “niching-down” across a wide range of services into a sustainable and rather fine art. To say this is bucking the trend, in a sector where it’s tricky finding companies with well-honed skills in many areas, is to say the least.

Driven by overall property performance as its chief design outcome—rather than focusing on building performance alone—the team is guided by a simple, principal question when it works on integrated site and building projects. How can the client be assured of a sustainable development? This holistic approach to project design informs all

planning, from the big picture down to the smallest details. This means providing clients, from land developers to building owners, with everything from environmentally responsible lighting controls and wall finishes to sophisticated upholstery fabrics. »



► Thinking it through

Located in Melville, New York, with a satellite office in Manhattan, this full-service architectural, engineering, and surveying leader has served customers from Montauk to New York and beyond into eastern Pennsylvania and the Hudson Valley for nearly seven decades. Today, the spirited members of the Nelson + Pope team have a “ground-up” habit of thinking things through from the moment they start all the way to project delivery.

Nelson + Pope serves a diverse array of customers across both the private and public sectors, and also works on federal infrastructure. “We’re diversified not only in our services but also in our client base. We’re trying to provide every service to every range of clients we can find,” says John Perrotta, Partner and head of the mechanical engineering department.

As a result, its teams are exposed to a vast and diverse range of work, which in turn gives them a wide frame of reference that informs and guides their design choices and decisions, benefiting customers in multiple ways.

Because the company invests in a large team of seasoned experts passing on their industry experience to younger professionals, it’s preserving and sharing generational knowledge in the best way possible—on the job. That means that Nelson + Pope (established in 1954) can realistically call itself the home of next-generation design built on decades’ worth of hard-won experience.

“Within each department is a carefully crafted organizational structure—a tiered system, if you will. As a result, there’s a high level of collaboration within each department,” says Perrotta.

Nelson + Pope evolved around providing clients with the best experience possible, and services were briskly added and integrated as the need for them arose. Beginning as a land developer doing surveys, roadway design, sanitation design and similar, the company expanded into architecture, also adding mechanical, electrical, and plumbing engineering services. As part of its commitment to making collaboration easy and pain-free for customers, the company provides project owners with a single point of contact.





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Accessing expertise

Clients benefit from easy access to the company's environmental planning affiliate, Nelson Pope Voorhis (NPV). This environmental, land use, planning, and economic consulting firm opened its doors in 1997, supporting Nelson + Pope in complex planning, zoning and environmental analyses, and resource assessments and management.

"The team collaborated with the Sisters of St. Joseph and the Peconic Land Trust to bring into being a verdant sanctuary conducive to peaceful spiritual reflection and sustainable activities."

NPV also serves the public, private, retail, institutional, and government sectors with environmental planning services from its offices in Melville, Long Island and Suffern, New York. The NPV team takes care of planning, environmental testing, permitting, landscape architecture, and environmental assessments, working intensively on the sustainability of projects, including landscaping. The team is also responsible for restoration of the property post-construction. Apart from ecological and

ergonomic considerations, its buildings are typically positioned to make economic sense, yet always in a way that makes the least impact on the environment.

On approval of a project, all departments commence work on their contribution to the final product. Each department is headed by an experienced professional in the field. Having everyone in the same building allows for easy collaboration and means every aspect of each project dovetails smoothly into the next, giving customers seamless access to information.

Some of NPV's customers are municipalities needing to improve the quality of water resources in and around entire service regions like villages or towns. The team not only helps municipalities develop ideas for the future of their properties but also guides them through finding grants and applying for funding.

"We look at their properties as a whole. We evaluate what they have as options. We then get into looking for where the great opportunities are. In a company version, we go out and look at how we do a master plan for the entire property to make it a good, sustainable property," says Rusty Schmidt, Senior Landscape Ecologist. ►►

► Future-proof

Design is always informed by the future and people's needs within the context of that projected future. "Energy efficiency and occupant comfort is what drives our design, whether it's new construction or renovation," says Michael Sciarra, RA, Senior Partner and head of the architectural department.

"An interesting question that arises when looking at these aspects of comfort within an energy-efficient building is lighting control." Considering that every client looks for some level of cost savings on the capital outlay, optimizing performance is paramount to selling these concepts.

"We're trying to wring every bit of energy efficiency we can out of a building. How do you make sure the lights are only on—and only on enough—when somebody's in a room? And light is necessary," Sciarra continues, underscoring the importance of daylight harvesting systems and occupant controls in such energy-efficient buildings. "It's not just LED lights; it's about making sure that lights are only on when they're absolutely necessary."

The company is also well-versed in decarbonizing buildings through fuel conversions, such as moving them from natural gas and oil consumption to all-electric heat pumps, bringing down operating costs and reducing the use of fossil fuels.

Nature by design

Reflecting its goal of achieving the highest level of environmental responsibility and resource efficiency possible, the company also creates high-performance, low-maintenance garden spaces.

Investing in native flora that will flourish within the natural rainfall profile of the area, the team does its bit to encourage the presence of native flora and fauna. Its designers work to the rhythms and provision of nature rather than to imported ideas of status and beauty. "If an irrigation system is required, it's a smart system that only turns on when the plants need it," Schmidt says. By not having watering systems on set schedules, green spaces use far less water and energy to thrive.

NPV's designers take particular cognizance of the shape and character of the native plants they use in the landscapes that frame its buildings. Plants that do not need maintenance through pruning or any other form of manicuring present minimum cost. They also tend to live longer. Schmidt points out that it's rare to find people who fully understand how to manage these modern, eco-efficient properties, as most people are so schooled in outdated ideas about landscaping that education is imperative if care and maintenance are to run smoothly.

Customers, the best marketing

The company's devotion to its customers is reflected in the return customers and referrals Nelson + Pope gets from its clients, with the result that the company has never had to market itself.

That continues, even in economically tough times. During COVID-19, the company grew so much that it had to move premises, bringing its teams a much better-appointed new workspace. Now, as staff numbers continue to escalate in response to new clients and projects, its rapid growth has the company leadership wondering whether it shouldn't have gone for even bigger premises.

In the team are people in their seventies and youngsters in their first position. Culturally, there is a good level of diversity too, and the company has a high proportion of women in its teams.

"We have more diversity in our office than many around. In the time I've been here, it has improved. It just doesn't matter who you are; as long as you bring the skill set to the job, that's the most important thing," says Perrotta.

Prestige projects

There are scores of projects that do the affiliated companies proud. One of the larger projects was the architecture, interior design, and mechanical, electrical, and plumbing engineering of the New North Shore Company 2 Fire House in Rocky Point, New York.

Multiple interior offices and amenities including a community meeting hall, recreation room, sleeping quarters, and training rooms stretch across the beautiful 11,000-square-foot facility with its stone floors complimented by timeless wood wainscoting and crown molding. Here, the company was responsible for a large range of activities like topographic survey and mapping, preliminary and final designs, plans and specifications, soil borings, landscape architecture, construction oversight, and so on.

The replacement of an HVAC system at New York's Southampton Town Hall was also key. Town Hall, a former school building, was previously tethered to a steam supply from an adjacent schoolhouse. The company developed a streamlined solution that gave Town Hall an independent HVAC system, a 130-ton variable refrigerant-flow air-source heat pump system with heat recovery that ensures an even temperature throughout the building. The system comes complete with a custom-designed 600-amp, 480-volt electrical service, single room controls, and overall full building control for ambient comfort in every season. An outdoor air system also distributes fresh air throughout the building, ensuring good indoor air quality.

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Another project that stands out for NPV is a landscape master plan comprising sustainable landscapes complete with ecological wetlands, created for the 200-acre campus of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Brentwood, New York. Since adoption of the plan in 2018, NPV has been working with the Sisters on implementing various elements of the master plan, including installation of multiple green infrastructure / stormwater management projects, installation of a four-acre solar array with specifically designed native pollinator habitat, management of Southern Pine Beetle infestation, and installation of a large native meadow.

The client's objective was to create a space not only supportive to the growth of the parish but also to reflect the church's progressive view on land preservation, management, and diversity, embodying its Land Ethic Statement. The team collaborated with the Sisters and the Peconic Land Trust to bring into being a verdant sanctuary conducive to peaceful spiritual reflection and sustainable activities like gardening; to develop good quality water infrastructure; and to protect and restore the site's sensitive historic and natural heritage areas.

As part of the solar array project, Schmidt ran a complete wildlife survey and ecological monitoring. While taking care of the native

plantings around the solar panels, establishing and maintaining the presence of pollinator populations, especially bees and butterflies, was at the heart of the study and was made possible by the Nature Conservancy.

As industrial shipping grows in tandem with online shopping, the company has also seen a sharp rise in the building of warehousing facilities, fulfillment centers, trucking terminals, and similar logistics facilities. But that does not mean that old-fashioned retail is standing still, the company leaders point out.

On the contrary, they're seeing a significant increase in demand in the retail sector. "We have a tremendous amount of brick-and-mortar retail work. And there's a lot of shopping center rehabilitation, a lot of new construction and renovation. Those retail property owners are doing what they can to draw customers back to the local shops," says Sciarra.

With this continued drive toward economic expansion, Nelson + Pope's customers are no doubt poised to keep this industry leader even busier than usual. We look forward to seeing what the future brings. ■

Content Developed by Logan Neil

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Designing for NET ZERO



ORCUTT | WINSLOW

For over 50 years, the national design firm, Orcutt | Winslow has been disrupting architecture through innovation, experimentation, and invention. And it goes on...

Written by Margaret Patricia Eaton

Orcutt | Winslow was founded in 1971 by Herman Orcutt and Paul Winslow. Ashley Mulhall, the company's Senior Associate, High Performance and Sustainability Leader, who co-chairs or serves on several national and state committees which focus on the reduction of greenhouse gases from the built environment, says, "From the beginning, the founders were very much about being responsive to the environment. I don't think it was just a coincidence that the company was founded shortly after Earth Day was initiated and has evolved as a LEED pioneer in Arizona, supportive of building certifications and the standards that are prevalent now."



LEED and leadership

When the U.S. Green Building Council, which developed the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification standards, opened its third chapter in the country in Arizona in 2002, Orcutt | Winslow was one of the first firms to join. For the past five years, Mulhall has served on the council's Market Leadership Advisory Board.

"There was a lot of momentum when the USGBC was formed, and a small group of individuals—before my time—worked with state legislators through the Governor's office to have LEED Silver certification be a requirement for any state-funded building. Our company designed some of the first LEED-certified buildings in the state, including the first certified high school. So that's something we can hang our hats on."

By 2013 Orcutt | Winslow had grown to be one of the two largest firms in Arizona. "Leadership realized," says Mulhall, "that if we wanted to keep growing, we needed to expand and look outside Arizona. The Southeast is one of the fastest growing areas in the country, so we followed the work and expanded there."

Currently, the company has offices in Nashville, Tennessee; Jefferson, Indiana; Shreveport, Louisiana; Orlando, Florida; Phoenix, Arizona; and Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas.

"The founders were very much about being responsive to the environment. It wasn't a coincidence that the company was founded shortly after Earth Day was initiated."



High-performance

Orcutt | Winslow's portfolio of high-performance buildings—hospitals and clinics, schools, themed entertainment and hospitality, sports and recreation facilities, community gathering spaces, and senior living residences—reflects projects that were designed not only to meet stringent environmental building certification standards but also to meet the needs of the end-users by supporting and sustaining the purpose for which they were built.

In contrast to Orcutt | Winslow's designs today, the human comfort standards of much of the architecture designed during the 1970s were at an all-time low. Mulhall recalls the windowless school that she attended, built in 1974, and says, "I think my career path, in part, has been influenced by how horrible that educational environment was. Before air conditioning, buildings had to have windows that opened, and because there were windows everyone had access to daylight, so buildings designed before air conditioning were much better for health and for supporting positive learning environments. Now we've come full circle, and we're valuing those things again because scientific evidence shows that connection with nature is important for human health."

It should be emphasized, however, that from the inception of Orcutt | Winslow, the founders and staff understood the importance of designing buildings **for people**, buildings with natural light and fresh air.

Many of these buildings also meet the WELL Building Standard®, another certification program under the auspices of the USGBC, which combines best practices in design and construction with evidence-based medical and scientific research.

For example, WELL Building Standards include such things as attractive, open stairwells that encourage exercise, as opposed to narrow stairwells that serve only as emergency exits, and nutrition consultation with cafeteria managers. »



The greenest building

With the knowledge and technology that's available now, "we could design new net zero buildings all day," Mulhall says, "but unless we fix the buildings we already have, we're not going to meet our 2030 goals. The next frontier is taking the existing building stock and making it meet the standards."

"From a carbon perspective, existing buildings have a great story because the materials that have the greatest carbon absorption and sequestering abilities—concrete, steel, glass—are already there. Therefore, any renovation will have a lower carbon footprint than that of new construction, and that's exciting. There's a saying in the industry that the greenest building is one that's already been built."

► AIA's 2030 Commitment

In 2009, Orcutt | Winslow was one of the earliest signatories to the 2030 Commitment of the AIA (American Institute of Architects), an actionable climate strategy that provides a set of standards and goals for reaching net zero emissions in the built environment by the year 2030. In the past five years, signatories have doubled with over 1,100 committed firms and more than 56,000 architectural and engineering construction professionals represented.

Mulhall co-chaired the 2030 Commitment Committee for the years 2021 and 2022 and received annual reports from members. As she explained to Greg Menti (in *"New report outlines progress of 2030 Commitment,"* October 26, 2022), "One of the most interesting metrics is that we're only tracking about a 50 percent reduction over our original baseline, while the current target is 80 percent. We've plateaued as an industry and we've been trying to get to the bottom of it and help firms over that hurdle."

She cites factors that caused the plateau in 2021, including the pandemic, supply chain issues, and an 'uneven political landscape', noting also that with an increase in signatories, a lot of firms are just getting started and moving a bit slower.

"But we also need to stop thinking of 80 percent as our target and make a move toward 100 percent net zero as the real target. That'll move the needle faster," she says. "I don't think all architects recognize how much of an impact they can have on climate change—the reality is, a *huge* impact. Once you start on that path, the lift gets lighter. It gets simpler, and you really begin to make a difference."

Scope one of the process which will enable an existing building to meet the 2030 Commitment starts with a greenhouse gas inventory, looking at the direct use of fossil fuels, followed by scope two, which focuses on anything that uses energy directly, while scope three involves intentional use—for example, how employees commute.

Clients are helped to reduce the amount of energy they consume and consider how to replace equipment that uses fossil fuels with electric equipment. Whatever is left over can be offset with renewables and carbon credits.

"Some of the biggest challenges we face involve working in occupied buildings such as hospitals and schools," she says. "How do you take a working, functioning hospital that uses fossil fuels to produce heat and steam, that has to remain operational and can't be closed for months, and make it carbon neutral? This is something the health care industry is investigating now."

According to Mulhall, hospitals as an industry in the U.S. use more energy than some small countries and will require an industry-wide shift in how they're heated and cooled, including the invention of new technologies to achieve goals on that scale.

"It's a step-by-step process and most of our clients are looking at 20 to 25 years to accomplish it. The goal for 2030 is that any new building will be net zero, but for our clients who own large hospital campuses with millions of square feet, it will take a couple of decades to fund the project, because we're talking billions of dollars over 20 years."

"Existing buildings have a great story because any renovation will have a lower carbon footprint than a new construction, and that's exciting. The greenest building is one that's already been built."



TSG Center for Spiritual Development
Sonoran Desert

The Living Building Challenge

The Living Building Challenge (LBC) was launched in 2006 by the Cascadia Green Building Council (a chapter of both the USGBC and Canada GBC) and is overseen by the International Living Future Institute, a non-profit organization located in Seattle, WA.

Mulhall describes the LBC which is based on consideration and integration of seven components: place, water, energy, materials, health and happiness, equity, and beauty, as being even more “deep green” than LEED or WELL. Designers have been talking about “doing less bad,” but LBC seeks to turn buildings into “positive, regenerative spaces.”

The Living Building Challenge is not only about reducing energy; it’s about producing more energy onsite than what is being consumed, and rather than just reducing water use, it’s about design that allows for the collection of more water than is being used. Each aspect of the building: the site in relation to the environment, the choice of sustainable materials, and the aesthetics as well as its impact on the health and well-being of users, is carefully considered.

Architecture of the spirit

Mulhall was excited to share news of a unique LBC building project Orcutt | Winslow designed and which was completed this past March for the TSG Foundation for Spiritual Development.

This foundation, which was originally centered around publishing, is based on the writing and teaching of Torkom Saraydarian, a spiritual scholar who focused on ancient wisdom as found in all religions. After he died in 1997 at the age of 80, his work to help individuals make decisions that result in happiness, health, creativity, and success was carried on by his daughter, Gita, who recognized the importance of having a facility to bring people together.

“Essentially it’s a health care project because it’s about healing the soul, the opposite of how we start healing the body in standard hospitals, but we went through the same principles we use for health care,” Mulhall says.

The 12,000 square foot building is set on 11 acres of pristine land in the Sonoran Desert, surrounded by the scenic mountains of Scottsdale, Carefree, and Cave Creek, and is designed to harmonize with the environment and prepare visitors for the joyful learning experience within.

For example, landscaped parking areas are constructed from stabilized, decomposed granite or gravelcrete surfaces, which are permeable to minimize the heat island effect. A pedestrian bridge crosses a shallow desert wash with native plantings, and links the parking areas to the building, giving visitors a time to pause and reflect as they enter or leave. Bicycle racks are also provided. Principles of Feng Shui as well as passive and active energy strategies are integrated into the design of both the site and the building.

As Mulhall concludes, “It’s an extraordinary story of working with nature and healing the desert as part of our work to heal people. It’s a beautiful project and everyone who comes in has experienced beauty, calmness, and joy.” ■

A Fresh Perspective *for* 40 YEARS



 Kevin Braughton
Principal



Written by Claire Suttles

E&S Construction Engineers is recognized for its innovative and challenging projects throughout the United States. In 2019, *Construction in Focus* profiled the company's successful balance of culture, engineering, and architecture in an award-winning redevelopment project in Honolulu that required the incorporation of revered heritage trees.

Since then, E&S has celebrated its 40th anniversary and has been hard at work on a number of new, noteworthy projects. We sat back down with Principal Kevin Braughton and he filled us in on the exciting details.

The Hanover, Maryland-based firm has been in business since 1982, when the original partners, Erwin Everett and Robert Stearns, founded the company, lending their initials to the name. "At that time in '82, we were just a small regional consulting firm," says Braughton. The humble startup grew steadily and, in 1992, the company reincorporated as



E&S Construction Engineers Incorporated and began offering a larger range of services.

The next major milestone came in 2002, when new partners William Kingsland and Allen Poist assumed day-to-day firm operations. Braughton joined the partnership in 2015 and, in May of last year, E&S achieved its 40-year benchmark.

This history culminates in the opening of a brand new, state-of-the-art office in February of this year, after operating out of the same location for nearly four decades. The relocation was timed perfectly. “We moved in as a recognition of our 40th anniversary,” Braughton says. And the relocation isn’t just a surface-level change; the new space is a “completely different concept in the way we do business.”

Staying in business for 40 years isn’t easy. Braughton credits the team’s conscientiousness as a key factor in the company’s ongoing success. “We’re a white glove, high-touch consulting firm who really takes care and custody of our customers’ projects as if they were our own. We like to spend our clients’ money like it’s ours. And through that approach and being service-oriented and really nurturing our clients, it’s just led to a lot of repeat business. In fact, much of our business is through existing customers, some of which we’ve been doing business with for 40 years,” he says.

E&S delivers a comprehensive range of mechanical, electrical, and plumbing (MEP) design and construction management services, from project conception all the way through to commissioning. These high-quality services cover multiple markets, including retail, entertainment, restaurant, mixed-use, indoor agriculture, industrial, assisted living, multifamily, hospitality, education, and more. Several recent projects and benchmarks showcase the team’s expertise.

“We’re a white glove, high-touch consulting firm who really takes care and custody of our customers’ projects as if they were our own.”

In April 2021, for example, E&S was awarded a Master Service Agreement to provide MEP design services for all Mid-Atlantic Starbucks projects.

E&S also designed the \$45 million renovation for Baltimore, Maryland’s iconic Lexington Market. Over 200 years old, this historic site is the oldest continuously operated market in the United States. The project included the planting of more than 500 trees and plants along the public plaza adjoining the market.



Owned and operated by the Whitman Family Development, Bal Harbour Shops is South Florida’s premier high-end luxury shopping center. E&S designed, and is currently building, a \$550 million expansion and renovation, which will add approximately 250,000 square feet of gross leasable area (GLA). Restrictions on the project site add an extra challenge.

“There’s not a lot of real estate for supporting activities,” Braughton explains. “So there are a lot of logistical challenges in managing contractor flow, material and delivery flow, the sequence in which things are constructed and demolished. The phasing of the project is [such that] we had to build a new parking garage in order to demolish the existing parking garage and build the expansion within the footprint of the old deck that’s being demoed. That’s the arrangement on-site and how they’re achieving the additional square footage.” The project is scheduled for completion in November 2025. ►►



“E&S designed the \$45 million renovation for Baltimore, Maryland’s iconic Lexington Market. Over 200 years old, this historic site is the oldest continuously operated market in the United States.”

► Currently, the company is working on two indoor agricultural facilities. One of them—a 180,000-square-foot state-of-the-art indoor cultivation and processing center—will utilize LED lighting technologies and leachate reclamation. “Essentially, that’s runoff,” says Braughton. “When the plants are irrigated and the irrigation runs through the soil medium, it’s collected and it goes down a series of drains. We catch all of that in a storage tank, and then we treat it, and then we’re able to reuse it for irrigation again.”

Leachate reclamation is often underutilized, making its incorporation particularly significant. “It is unusual in that not many people employ this approach because it’s cost-prohibitive in the initial infrastructure,” Braughton says. “But over the course of operating the facility, it saves the client a tremendous amount of money and utility cost.”

Covering eleven acres, the second indoor agricultural facility features cultivation, processing, and retail elements. Noteworthy aspects here include condensate reclamation and liquid-cooled LED lighting technology.

No matter what the project, the E&S team strives to take the most environmentally friendly approach. The company employs LEED-certified engineers who can provide clients with cost-effective green building solutions that meet the project’s objectives and budget. This is particularly important when clients face tough budgeting choices. “Our work in wanting to contribute to a greener planet lies in finding cost-effective solutions in which our clients can keep some of those green initiatives in the project,” Braughton explains.

To this end, the company’s LEED & Energy Efficiency Services include LEED Design, LEED peer review, ASHRAE (American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers) energy audits and studies, Energy Conservation

Measures (ECM) analysis and recommendations, conditions assessments, energy incentive calculations and applications for utility rebate programs, energy modeling, heating and cooling load calculations, equipment replacement and upgrades, comparative mechanical system studies, and building automation.

With this breadth of tools at the team’s disposal, the company’s commitment to the planet is expressed in a variety of ways, depending on the project. “From an MEP—mechanical, electrical, and plumbing perspective—we do it by finding ways to reduce utility cost: primarily water and electricity.” Take the Mall of San Juan project in Puerto Rico, for instance. “We designed a rainwater reclamation system where we would capture rainwater, store it in a below-ground cistern and treat it, and then make use of it in a number of ways—use it for makeup water for our cooling towers, we could use it for irrigation, et cetera.”

The two indoor agricultural facilities currently underway are two other prime examples of the company’s commitment to preserving natural resources. Leachate reclamation and condensate reclamation are both planet-friendly, water-saving techniques.

After 40 years in business, it could be tempting for the firm to slow down and rest on its laurels. But company leaders are having none of that. Instead, the team will “continue to execute on our strategic growth plan,” Braughton says. “That includes breaking into markets that we’re not currently in over the next five years. That’s always a part of our business development model and is in our overall strategic growth plan.”

From a small, regional consulting firm to a national powerhouse of market-leading design and construction management services, E&S has proven its ability to take things to the next level. **Construction in Focus**, and the industry at large, will be keeping a close eye on the next developments as they unfold. ■





61 years of HEALTH & WELLNESS by DESIGN

ESa

Written by Pauline Müller

ESa has more than six decades of providing collaborative, sustainable wellness and architectural design expertise to international customers who are leaders in the health-care, hospitality, education, corporate, and senior living sectors. This Nashville, Tennessee-based expert in architectural design creates interior and landscape architecture, master planning, and space planning.

At ESa, good design purposefully translates into sustainable design thanks to the team's pragmatic philosophy—one that underpins its reputation for innovating and establishing spaces for healing and wellness that make a real

difference to the lives and recovery time of its clients' patients. The company's team even produced a whitepaper addressing the mental health crisis amongst college students and how the design of healthier spaces can help alleviate the problem.

Ginny Webb, Project Manager, was instrumental in writing the whitepaper, which emphasizes the importance of having easy access to nature, something that goes hand-in-hand with sustainable construction if humans are going to get health and wellness right.

"One of my favorite catchwords in sustainability is resiliency. The response

to a changing planet is, arguably, more important than the mitigation measures we put in place," says Jordan Fay, Project Manager.

For this team, wellness starts at home. The company's offices are LEED Platinum certified. In its interior design department, it decorates with safer materials that are as toxin-free as possible, with few volatile organic compounds. To support this mission, the company partners with Material Bank®, a leader in delivering responsible, sustainable design materials. This allows for combined shipments to reduce travel-related carbon emissions, and designers can return their samples for recycling. »





► ESa's sustainability efforts are data-driven and include interventions like rainwater harvesting and finding improved ways of dealing with stormwater in the face of higher flooding rates. "While we are architects first, we also know that we are advocates for the environment. We hope our sustainability efforts can trickle down to the firms that also may not have full-time employees dedicated to focusing only on that [aspect]," says Fay. As a signatory of the American Institute of Architects' 2030 Commitment since 2022, the company has a relentless drive toward achieving sustainable design and collecting relevant data to guide future design decisions.

ESa is well regarded for its insight into all aspects of the construction and design industry, and it graciously shares these with its customers as a matter of course. "We've heard many times that they appreciate us being like an advisor to them. Our

work goes beyond just drawing and documenting. We like to walk alongside our clients and be partners," says Webb.

When it comes to the inspiration behind its exciting designs, Webb insists that no single project is ever designed in a vacuum. The team is as much guided by its customers' vision and the function that its buildings will perform as it is by aesthetics and sustainability. "We run the gamut between greenfield sites, urban infill sites, and adaptive reuse projects, so it is the context that points us in the direction of what we end up delivering," says Fay.

The company has done a lot of work toward giving a more tangible shape to the wellness and sustainability principles on which it was founded and that it continues to uphold. To this end, it has recently published another comprehensive whitepaper outlining its ethos in great detail to serve as a guideline for the future.

Earl Swensson Associates, now ESa, began in 1961 when it was founded by Earl Swensson, who passed away at the age of 95 just over a year ago. One of the company's legacies is a signature on the Nashville skyline: the AT&T building, affectionately known as 'the Batman building' by locals and still the tallest building in the state since its erection in 1994. After this project, and several famous hotel buildings it designed in the region, not even COVID-19 could keep this team down. Despite the hospitality industry being one of those hardest hit, the team still completed a few projects in this sector during that challenging time.

To be sure, the company's tenacity is rooted in its staff. People enjoy working there, as is clear from its median tenure that spans well over a decade. Nearly half of ESa's staff members have worked there for 20 to 30-plus years, and with around 190 architects working under one roof, that is no small achievement.

"One of our biggest points of pride is that we are a single office," shares Fay. "Everybody knows each other and goes to lunch together. We call ourselves the ESa family. We are the largest in Nashville and Tennessee based on our number of architects." Other firms may have as many architects but work will be spread across multiple offices.

"The team is as much guided by its customers' vision and the function that its buildings will perform as it is by aesthetics and sustainability."

Naturally, maintaining clear lines of communication is imperative in a world where calculation errors potentially cost lives, and this is where the company's ingenious hive structure and state-of-the-art technology become invaluable. With a comprehensive

software platform, nothing gets lost in translation, and ESa's quality management team also pores over all drawings before signing them off and releasing them into the field.

"The quality management of our drawings is unparalleled. I have worked in a lot of firms, and there's never been this level of expertise reviewing the drawings. We partner with a lot of consultants and third parties that check our drawings as well," says Webb, highlighting how invaluable it is to have networks of professionals across the country to be able to uphold its high safety standards.

All of ESa's projects stand out and perform optimally, and one particularly eye-catching building is The Lodge at Fall Creek Falls in Spencer, Tennessee. This stunning two-and-a-half-story lodge features rustic elements combined with sleek modernity. Three fire areas invite people to gather around and engage in conversation or enjoy quiet togetherness if they so choose. The textures and warm ambiance reflect the hospitality of the people who make this lovely destination so singular. Upholding Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards throughout, the building performs every bit as well as any fully certified project would, only without the certifications. ►►



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▶ Another project guided by sustainability and innovation is Miles Nashville, a 22-story building that offers everything from below-grade parking to retail space and over 600 rental units. The building was designed based on LEED Silver standards and comes with what the company refers to as micro-units: small but well-appointed apartments.

“These small, 345-square-foot, fully-furnished apartment units come with all of the luxury and amenities you’d expect in a larger unit. This appeals to those wanting to limit their carbon footprint and live more minimally,” the company describes. The building also features a well-appointed park, and rainwater is harvested for use in the building’s sewage system. In response to the times, residents’ parking spaces are limited to half the number of units.

ESa also designs to the WELL Building Standard, which takes an all-inclusive approach to considering human behavior, building function, and health in design. One of its most outstanding examples of a WELL-standard project is the Bethlehem, Pennsylvania-based Moravian University’s Hauptert Union building, or the HUB. The university takes sustainability seriously so before taking on this transformation, the company designed the institution’s health sciences building, which received LEED certification.

“ESa’s sustainability efforts include interventions like rainwater harvesting and finding improved ways of dealing with stormwater in the face of higher flooding rates. ‘While we are architects first, we also know that we are advocates for the environment.’”



In keeping with its sustainability philosophy, the design of the new facility also adheres to all areas of the WELL-standards profile. Stringent WELL guidelines demand easy access to outdoor spaces on all three stories. To manage noise, an acoustician designed a solution that includes spacing silent and noise-friendly zones in such a way as to make both areas fully functional. Realizing ideal indoor ambient temperatures through innovation and next-generation materials added another layer of sophistication to the final result.

Easy movement around the building and surrounding areas while blending with the rest of the campus was a further factor in the final design. Other spaces allow for mental health breaks and rest, multi-faith spiritual devotion and reflection, and a health and counseling facility, and all are near safe and accessible natural spaces. As it stimulates lively and active community engagement through its design, the campus offers a



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FLOORING

lovely event and conference facility, a spectators' terrace facing the athletics field, and a range of suites that allow for group engagement of all types.

Moreover, there is the extension of the Saint David's Women's Center of Texas in Austin. One of the project's final goals, apart from being modern and perfectly functional when complete, is to comply with the Austin Energy Green Building (AEGB) two-star rating code as stipulated by city bylaws for all such facilities within the St. David's North Austin Medical Center's unit development district. The final product will also adhere to the practices dictated by Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) guidelines. As the facility serves the community, it is also in line with the vision of the Imagine Austin comprehensive plan, which seeks to reuse and renew properties that are already available in a bid to improve quality of life.

As such, the expansion was built on campus land, which meant causing minimum impact on the surrounding environment. The design was completed with an acute awareness of light pollution and ways to eliminate it. In the same vein, easy access to surrounding facilities was accomplished by establishing comfortable, safe walking zones. The building also exhibits excellent performance, with a nearly ten percent reduction in

energy use compared to the norm, and it uses 35 percent less water than the standard consumption rate while harvesting stormwater using existing infrastructure.

The designers also went out of their way to create fresh, healthy spaces that are as human-friendly as possible. The use of environmentally responsible and sustainable materials also contributes to the already great user experience in the spaces.

Looking ahead, ESa is approaching the future of design and construction with a healthy dose of curiosity in terms of how the economic effects of geopolitics, in tandem with climate change and advances in technology, will change how we arrange our lives in relation to our living and work spaces. Word around the industry, according to Webb, is that adaptive reuse is on the rise, as is leveraging technology and innovation to enhance such spaces for quality living. The advent of autonomous vehicles, for instance, is leading to a rise in parking garage conversions and electric car charging station retrofitting.

No matter how the market may change, however, the ESa team is ready to adapt and build upon the principles of sustainable design and construction for generations to come. ■



Diversity, Integrity and a Love for

CONSTRUCTION



Written by Allison Dempsey

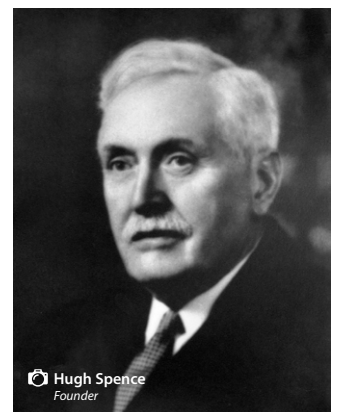
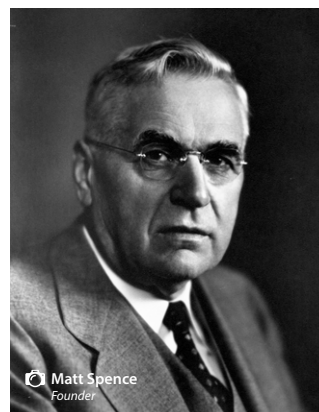
If an organization's values set the standards for its personnel, Spence Brothers' values have poured the foundation for its decades of success. Founded in Saginaw, Michigan in 1893 by brothers Matt and Hugh Spence as a start-up construction company, the business has grown and thrived as it has taken on a number of notable projects.

These benchmark projects include Saginaw Valley State University's Pioneer Hall, the first construction project to acquire LEED Certification in the region; the Dow Chemical Company's 210,000-square-foot Business Services Center, constructed and occupied in just 11 months and honored with the Build Michigan Award in the Environmental category for its impressive sustainable features; and the company's largest contract to date, the \$72 million Genesee County Water Treatment Plant, delivered three months ahead of schedule. These works and others provide a great tribute to the company's legacy of exceeding expectations for its clients and project partners.

A true family organization now in its fourth generation, Spence Brothers knows the importance of loyalty, integrity and skilled craftsmanship.

"Myself and the other three Spences that are still in the company, were raised doing construction the right way from when we were little," says President and COO Ed Spence. "Our fathers, grandfathers, and great grandfathers worked in the business, and didn't force it on us. We all grew a sense of honor and leadership through family, and grew a love for construction the right way."

This included working in the field for years alongside tradesmen to learn the business, he adds.



"We grew [our skill sets] working side-by-side with subs, and we gained respect that way from the workers. We formed bonds with those folks, and now we have second generation laborers and carpenters that work for us as well."

This commitment and dedication extends to the company's sense of community, he adds. Spence Brothers has made the Great Lakes Bay region its home going on 130 years, and giving back to the community is vital. "We pride ourselves on repeat customers," says Spence. "We try and do things the right way with an honest day's work for an honest day's pay. That's been our mindset for 130 years."

It's a mindset that has resulted in a wealth of strong relationships, such as with the University of Michigan, for whom the company has constructed numerous enduring projects.

"The Spence leaders are very humble guys," says Dorian Banda, Senior Proposal Manager / Technical Writer. "They weren't just handed positions in management, and as an employee working for Spence, I can tell you that I see the difference it makes in their leadership every day." ►►

► While other companies' leadership might say they have an open door policy, she adds, there's a very distinct difference between firms she's worked for previously who may carry a family name but don't necessarily have any family working there.

"Here, the Spences in leadership have been brought up through the ranks from the ground up," says Banda. "When I walk in with an issue or concern or have input about a project pursuit, they're very open-minded. It's clear they've had to apply their hard work and dedication to get to the roles in leadership they have today. They have a very strong appreciation for hard work, dedication, and the knowledge their employees have to offer, no matter how new you are, no matter what gender you may be."

The company is also highly community-focused, choosing to remain in the City of Saginaw when other firms have expanded and moved on. "Spence leadership has always been very clear that 'this is where we were founded, and this is where we're going to stay,'" says Banda.

That commitment extends not only to the broader community but to employees and work ethic as well. Celebrating 130 years in business is no small feat, and it's one Spence Brothers takes great pride in.

"The longevity of being a fourth generation [company] speaks volumes to a solid base and anchor in a trustworthy firm that has high levels of integrity," says Vice President Brian Keeler. "That's the Spence name on the door. You can call anytime and

they're going to take that phone call. They're not sitting somewhere that's unreachable."

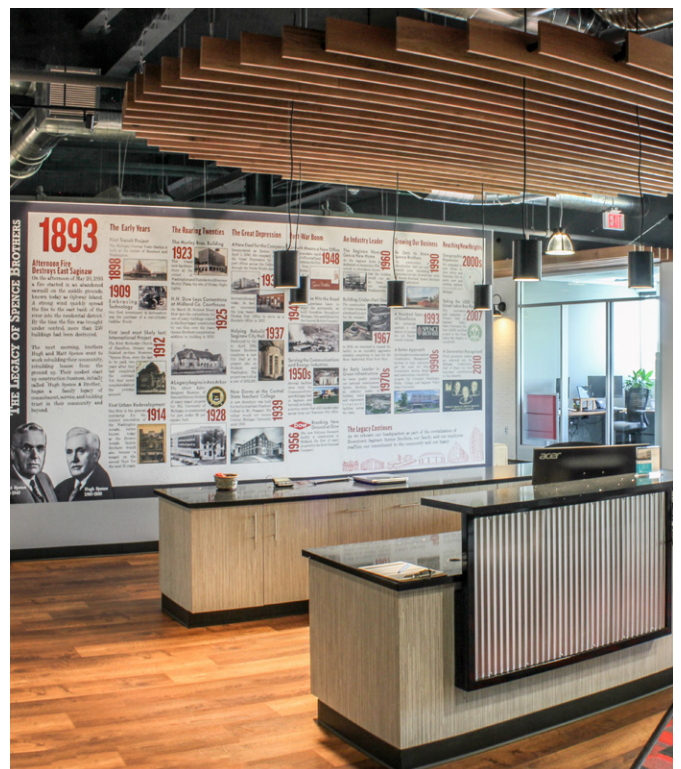
This includes getting involved in projects, he adds, a hands-on approach that ensures projects are dealt with properly and any issues are fixed or corrected. The owners get involved and sit down with project managers on a regular basis to see how projects are going, where the company can improve, and how they can help.

Improvement, of course, also includes an ongoing commitment to going green wherever possible.

"We're very much involved in the sustainability movement in the construction industry of this region," says Keeler. "We're promoting it within our employees, encouraging them to become LEED accredited and to understand Green Building Principles. We've hosted workshops locally that encourage Owners and other project partners to be more green and sustainable, as well."

Projects in pursuit of sustainability are of particular interest to Spence, he adds. "I want Spence to have the kind of identity that sits right up there with green building. So, if Owners in this region are thinking about building anything green or sustainable, Spence is the first place they call to get involved with the project."

Part of the sustainability movement is rehabbing existing facilities, including the company's own 9,350-square-foot headquarters in Saginaw. Spence Brothers moved its corporate offices to the SVRC Marketplace as part of its 125th





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anniversary celebration, carrying out a thorough renovation of the Saginaw News Building, which Spence Brothers had built in 1960. Half of the third story of the structure is occupied by the company's headquarters, which is a mix of various conference rooms, private offices, semi-private offices, and open concept workspaces.

Another notable rehabilitation project is the Webster Community Center Project in Pontiac, Michigan, a 57,496-square-foot historical elementary school being converted into a community center. Renovation plans include a communal kitchen, event and meeting spaces, youth services, an indoor grow room, community gardens with hoop houses, and an outdoor athletic field on six acres of land. Modifications will be carried out with consideration for maintaining the building's historical integrity while focusing on offering areas for a culinary hub, physical fitness, an indoor transportation hub, arts and culture, and space for launching small enterprises through co-working facilities that support regional entrepreneurs and innovators.

"It's very much a feel-good story for the city of Pontiac that's working toward the development and revitalization of their downtown districts," says Keeler. "We've been involved in many sustainable and historic facility renovations where the goals involved breathing new life into existing buildings." ➤



► When it comes to leading the way in sustainable practices, Spence also embraces a position of mentorship in helping other construction partners, from architects to subcontractors, by offering seminars and learning opportunities in LEED and other sustainability measures. And while Spence is looking to continue growing in all areas, one of the biggest challenges it faces in building is tied to manpower. The Michigan construction market is busy, which is a good thing, but getting qualified tradespeople to perform work is “very difficult” right now, shares Spence.

“We haven’t pursued work out of state for a couple of reasons, but one of the main reasons stems from our value for a better work-life balance—people being able to sleep in their beds and be home with their families.”

“We’re trying to step outside the box and do more recruiting through various avenues. It’s a hard sector to grow right now as far as finding tradespeople. We’re turning down opportunities because of manpower shortages across construction, which is unfortunate.” It’s an experience the entire industry shares at present.

Setting the company apart is the fact that it’s big enough to handle \$80 million jobs, but is also comfortable with much

smaller projects, adds Keeler. Maintaining a family feel is a big part of what contributes to that success as well. “Everybody knows people by name inside the company, which I think is important,” he says. “We’re very in touch with the employees and each other, but we’re big enough to handle some of the coolest and most interesting projects in our region and across the state.”

Understanding the importance of family and home life beyond daily work routines is also key, he adds. “There’s a definite balance. We haven’t pursued work out of state for a couple of reasons, but one of the main reasons stems from our value for a better work-life balance—people being able to sleep in their beds and be home with their families.” When it comes to recruiting, it’s a big draw to know you’ll be working within Michigan and close to home, he adds.

It’s difficult to imagine milestones more impressive than 130 years in business, but hitting 150 would certainly be one of them.

“We want to grow,” says Spence. “Moving forward means increasing diversity across all aspects of construction, which is very important. We want to grow more diverse within our personnel, supporting women in the workforce and welcoming more minorities to our team, which we’ve been working on as well.”

When it comes to construction management, there are many large firms that no longer self-perform, adds Banda, while Spence continues their tradition of performing concrete, carpentry, general trades, and selective demolition.





"I can't stress enough the hard work and dedication that really speaks to Spence leadership," she says. "They'll recognize foremen or laborers with potential out in the field and make an effort to grow that expertise toward a position as superintendent."

Growth also includes more opportunities to get involved in career fairs and trade shows where students will be visiting and making an effort to have a presence at these events to educate and foster interest in historically underrepresented groups.

"We're very proud of our roots and the idea of honesty, integrity, and above-board transparency," says Keeler. "Those are all words we live day in and day out. It's important in this business and to be around as long as we have, we have to have people trust us."

That trust is particularly imperative when it comes to telling clients something they may not want to hear. Cutting corners is not in the company's playbook, so doing a job quickly *and* cheaply—even at a client's request—just doesn't happen.

"That word integrity gets a bit overused in marketing, but this company truly brings it to the table of operations," says Banda. "Instead of telling Owners what they want to hear simply to win, it might instead be, 'we'll always be here if you need us, but it just can't be done for that price.' To witness the level of integrity it takes to walk away from a project is truly impressive."

Michigan's a tough construction market, but Spence Brothers started out as essentially a general contractor and has experienced great success by maintaining a diverse team and a rich skill set, says Keeler. Regardless of each individual's background, underpinning it all is an underlying love for construction.

"One of the reasons for our long-term success is the diversity we've been able to maintain in the construction business," Spence says. "We have a love and a respect for the people who work for us. As far as the last name Spence, we *are* a family, but we've brought in people from all backgrounds to help grow our leadership to maintain our edge in the Michigan market. And we've diversified that market to remain successful today." ■

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Written by William Young

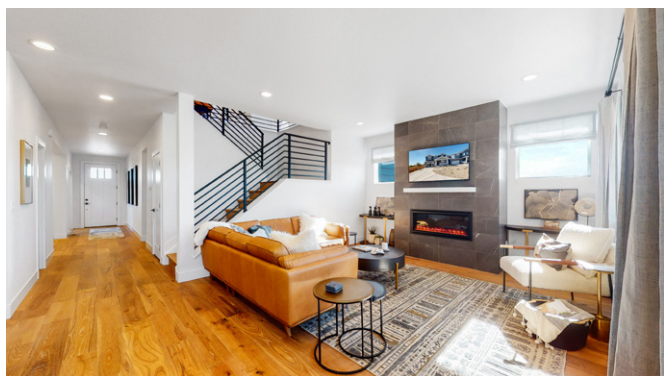
McStain Neighborhoods got its start in Boulder, Colorado in 1966 as a small home-building company. Over time, that endeavor grew to be one of the larger private builders along the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains—an area running through cities like Pueblo and Casper—with its work mainly focusing on the border town sector of the metropolitan area of Boulder itself.

From its inception, McStain has been focused on the twin principles of design and sustainability. The company's founders, Tom and Caroline Hoyt, kept those values at the core of the company philosophy throughout their managerial tenure and they remain at the heart of the business today. ►►

► The business continued to grow to a point where it was installing three hundred to four hundred homes annually by the mid-2000s, making it one of the more notable private home builders in the market at that time. Vice President of Operations Rick Lambert remembers that after the 2008 financial crisis, the company seriously downsized itself in a matter of months but held on to a piece of land it owned in Lafayette.

From that land, it managed to reenergize itself over the ensuing fifteen years, bringing it to where it is today, a business of over thirty employees installing seventy to eighty homes annually. “We’re back and will continue to grow and maintain our reputation as an important builder in the market,” he emphasizes.

The company has made its name around its home area by developing communities in many recognizable parts of Colorado. These include developments in places like Indian Peaks South in Lafayette, homes and condominiums built in the Del Mar community of Aurora, Casitas at Stapleton (now Central Park), Greenbriar Mobile Home Park in Westminster, and many more.



In 2022, McStain was named the Energy Star Builder Partner of the Year, a nationwide award that Lambert says is a big feather in the company’s cap. It also recently won the Department of Energy’s housing innovation award for a townhome it built in the Arras Park project, which he feels speaks to its commitment to sustainable building practices, and its being on the leading edge of its industry.

These ventures on the sustainability front are hardly new to the company. McStain’s commitment to sustainable building practices can be seen most distinctly in its BeWell homes. The business began this all-electric home project in 2022 and is still deeply involved. The company is excited about that, as well as that the community of Arras Park will soon be a WaterSense community, meaning the Environmental Protection Agency will certify that the homes in the community will use forty percent less water than a typical new home.

Vice President of Sales and Marketing Danielle Davis describes BeWell homes as involving many aspects of home and community building including land-planning, neighborhoods, green and open spaces, connecting communities to other neighborhoods, and more. BeWell also includes a commitment to customer satisfaction.

As clients journey from initially interacting with a community to finally becoming a homeowner, McStain and its workers are dedicated to helping them through the whole process. Lambert underlines that the customer experience is key to company operations, as it focuses on details that other builders often do not, including—and most importantly—what is best for a customer’s new home.

“In 2022, McStain was named the Energy Star Builder Partner of the Year.”

McStain backs up its sustainability-focused marketing, as its homes are certified by many third parties involved in renewable energy. “One hundred percent of our homes are certified by the Department of Energy as zero-energy ready,” Lambert states, and the homes are Energy Star-rated as well as Indoor airPLUS and WaterSense-compliant, and have a solar energy system to provide renewable energy for homeowners. He believes it is important that these certifications also come from larger organizations so that customers can better understand the standards to which the company holds itself.

Davis admits that the past twelve to eighteen months have been both the best and the worst of times for a business like McStain, thanks to the challenging environment in which the housing market currently finds itself. Fluctuations in the market



and homebuilding costs have led to situations where company sales have been stronger than anticipated—or even desired—followed by interest rates doubling and home buyers being scared off. This unpredictable environment is beginning to even, according to Davis, and demand is creeping back into the market while McStain and other home-building businesses are more constrained by low inventory.

“Colorado is an in-demand place,” Davis explains, “Many people feel they don’t want to give up a 2.5 to 3 percent interest rate to make what they see as a lateral move.” The company is hoping that the newfound balance in the housing market will reset operations, especially as supply chains are beginning to come back to a healthier state, and hard-to-get materials are more available than they have been of late.

McStain will remain steadfast in its efforts, especially as an influx of private equity money in 2022 has helped it balance its finances and is allowing the company to be more aggressive in land acquisition, which will further fuel its goals for the upcoming few years.

The company is optimistic about the future, as the market seems to be heading to a place where new homes are the only game

in town in some areas, which is the opportunity for the industry to step in and provide inventory at a more sustainable pace. Moreover, McStain continues to find itself at the forefront of an industry push toward improving homes by equipping new units with safer, all-electric appliances and greater weather readiness.

Lambert notes that several of the company’s projects are recently completed or will soon be, so attention will now be paid to kicking off projects while keeping an eye toward potential future endeavors. McStain’s teams are focused on buying land and establishing the building pipelines needed for them over the next two to four years so that it can return to its goal or re-attaining the previous company benchmark of two hundred homes per year. He admits this goal will likely not happen by 2024 as the company’s average sits now at about seventy to eighty homes annually but the potential is still high for 2025, so it must be ready for the jump to be made in the next two years.

McStain Homes is optimistic for both the future of the housing market and the business itself, as it continues to prepare itself for what could be the next great business boom which would propel it through the decade with renewed strength and a continued focus on design and sustainability. ■



TEX-COTE®

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"We're always testing and making sure that we've definitely got the latest and greatest technology in our coating systems."

Written by Claire Suttles

Tex-Cote LLC delivers a full line of decorative and protective architectural coatings for residential, commercial, transportation, and industrial applications. These coating materials are formulated so one coat can cover a surface thickly, without runs or drips.



Terry Wallace
Vice President of Sales, TEX-COTE®

"We're well diversified within our footprint," says Vice President of Sales Terry Wallace. As one of the industry's most technologically-advanced coatings manufacturers, the company's products can be seen on some well-known buildings and landmarks around the world.

Since its founding in 1961, the Panama City, Florida-based company has pushed the market forward through ongoing research and development, leading to several industry firsts. This next-generation thinking is particularly evident in the company's green products which boast low levels of volatile organic compounds (VOC) and can reduce cooling costs, according to a U.S. Department of Energy study.

Take the company's patented Coolwall® system, for example. "It's water-based, very low VOC, very easy to apply," Wallace says. "It uses these functional pigments [that] are zero VOC—very good for the environment—and the function of these pigments are to reflect the sun's rays in the infrared spectrum that adds to heat gain."

This creates an energy-saving, cooling effect. "If we can keep the wall assembly cooler because we're reflecting that sun, then we can keep the inside temperatures cooler, and what's really nice about it is we can keep the temperatures in a cooler realm with darker colors with these functional pigments, just like you might get with real light colors." ►►

▶ The Coolwall® system is just one of the company's many inventions. "Tex-Cote has been a market innovator," says Wallace. "We really believe that intellectual property is essential for differentiation and, as such, Tex-Cote has got a number of patents, a number of trademarks [for] products that are very user-friendly, that have that functionality."

Whatever the innovation, the impact on the environment is always carefully considered, and the team works hard to keep the entire manufacturing process as green as possible. This begins with limiting the number of types of raw materials. "We really try to keep the number of SKUs of raw materials down," Wallace says. "If we have fewer raw materials, that's lower impact on the environment."

Tex-Cote also works hard to conserve water throughout the manufacturing process. "As we clean [a vessel] down with water, we actually use that cleaned down water as the base water for the next batch that goes in... It's total reuse of water." When the water is no longer usable, any solids are carefully removed to minimize environmental impact. "It's clean water going back into the waste stream."

The company recently invested in a new system to lessen the environmental impact of the manufacturing process. "We just put in a new, state-of-the-art dust collection system in our factory in Panama City which collects all the particulates, gathers them, and keeps them in one place," Wallace says. "And that's great for not only the environment but also for worker safety."

In addition, Tex-Cote's curing process is environmentally friendly. "They cure within ambient temperature," Wallace explains. "So they don't have to run through a heater or a furnace in order to cure. There are a lot of factory coatings out there that literally have to be baked on, and you can imagine the environmental impact of all those furnaces [being used] to cure a coating."

The company encourages customers to choose the most environmentally friendly packaging option. "We offer an incentive for them to buy in the larger drums," Wallace says. "The benefit of that is those drums can be cleaned and reused, where most of the time when you start using one-gallon containers and five-gallon containers, most of those get sent to the landfill."

"If we can keep the wall assembly cooler because we're reflecting that sun, then we can keep the inside temperatures cooler."

The team does not let its own drums go to waste either. "A lot of the drums that we get from our suppliers, we will recycle or reuse or send back to them, and they will recycle and reuse them, so we're getting the same drums back again from them."

Tnemec Company, Inc., a leading manufacturer of industrial and architectural protective coatings, purchased assets of Tex-Cote in 2019. The acquisition strengthened both companies and



united shared values. “Themec is a fourth-generation, family-owned business, and Tex-Cote was a third-generation, family-owned business,” Wallace says.

The companies had worked together in the past and were aware of each other’s values and ways of doing business. “When the second and third-generation family members of Tex-Cote were looking to try to find a purchaser, we were one of their first calls because they liked the family values that we had; they liked the culture that we had, and they [wanted] to keep that same kind of culture and values with this company moving forward.”

After the acquisition, Themec kept Tex-Cote’s Panama City facility in operation, kept all the employees on board, and gave autonomy to keep up the good work. “They’re allowing Tex-Cote to continue to be a standalone entity,” Wallace says. “It’s got its own management. It’s got its own profit and loss. It’s got a lot of support from the mothership but it is definitely a standalone company, which allows us to be very nimble in the marketplace. We can meet the demands of our customers and special needs of a given project or a given requirement by an architect or an engineer.”

As well as permitting flexibility, the distinction makes sense due to the companies’ dissimilar focuses. “We specialize in different markets than what Themec specializes in,” Wallace says. “They’re much more in water and wastewater and industrial. We’re much stronger in the specialty architectural market.” Themec is always ready to lend a hand, however. “We do get support from Themec on all things related to [research and development], personnel, manufacturing, raw material procurement—especially during the pandemic.”

The pandemic highlighted the symbiotic relationship between Tex-Cote and its new parent company. “We were helping each other out immensely,” Wallace remembers. “We would share resources, and that was invaluable to meet the needs of the industry and our customer.” In short, the change in ownership has been mutually beneficial for all involved parties. “It’s been a fantastic three-plus years since the acquisition.”

Moving forward, the team is eager to keep expanding on its current success. This begins with maintaining strong connections with suppliers. “When we get into new product development, we really pride ourselves on having strong relationships with suppliers,” Wallace says. “Suppliers bring innovative technology to those companies that are open and willing to work with them on it, and we’re always excited about doing that because we don’t know what the next iteration of something might be that we can develop with the help of a raw material supplier.”



Finding the next iteration of a product will always be a key driver for the team. “We’re going to continue testing and utilizing the newest technology,” Wallace says. “As you can imagine, especially in this mixed-metal-oxide world of pigments, these infrared reflective pigments—they’re always fine-tuning and bringing some newer colors and more robust colors into this space. So, we’re always testing and making sure that we’ve definitely got the latest and greatest technology in our coating systems.”

And, of course, the team is eager to maintain their support of green initiatives. “We definitely want to continue our focus on energy-saving, long-lasting products,” Wallace says. “We’re going to continue participating in committees and advisory positions to help shape model codes and rules that are out there in this green space.”

With a solid, sixty-two-year track record, a team that is eager to deliver the most advanced green technologies and the support of a new parent company, Tex-Cote is well-positioned to achieve its goals for the future. ■



BIGGER & BIGGER
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BROTHERS PAVING & CONCRETE CORPORATION

Written by Nate Hendley

Huge changes have taken place at Brothers Paving & Concrete Corporation since *Construction in Focus* profiled the construction company in August 2018.

Based in Manassas, Virginia, Brothers' workforce has almost doubled, and the company is now part of Pave America, LLC, an umbrella firm with a nationwide reach. This move has given Brothers access to new markets and a broader labor pool.

"We advertise ourselves as Brothers Paving & Concrete, LLC, a Pave America company," Brothers President Aaron Goss explains.

The company's services include asphalt paving, sealcoating, concrete, asphalt repair, crack sealing, millings, pavement markings, and paving extras. Its main markets are residential (mostly in the form of HOAs or Homeowner Associations), commercial, and government.

Since joining Pave America, Brothers' commercial work has expanded and now includes big box clients such as Home Depot,

Target, and Walmart. Government work is often focused on schools and the company also completes projects in the utilities sector, primarily with gas companies. Utilities-related work can entail digging up roads and sidewalks so repair crews can mend or replace underground pipes and cables.

Brothers continues to garner high-profile assignments, having recently completed a huge project for the Dunbarton Community Association, an HOA based in Bristow, Virginia, for example. "We ripped out their entire network of roads and replaced it and did several other things like sidewalks and some driveways. It was a very large development and normally paving companies would not be able to handle it, but because we have so many crews and we have the capacity, it was done in record time and was very high quality," says Goss, with a touch of pride.

About 90 percent of Brothers' work is self-performed at present, although that figure might change slightly now that it's part of Pave America. ►

► The background to “bigger”

Some background: in 2021, Brothers Paving & Concrete was purchased by a private investment firm. At the same time, another private investment firm was going around acquiring other paving companies. In late February of this year, those two firms—Pavement Partners Holding, LLC and Brothers National, LLC—merged to create Pave America.

With its headquarters in Warrenton, Virginia, Pave America describes itself as “a leading provider of asphalt and concrete solutions, including maintenance, repair, milling, striping, and sealcoating services. Over 1,400 employees work at companies within the Pave America fold.”

Brothers helps other Pave America firms with projects and sometimes requests support in return. While Brothers primarily concentrates on the region “between Baltimore and Richmond” (a swath of the East Coast that includes Maryland, Washington DC, and Virginia), the firm is now taking on assignments farther afield, says Goss.

“Just last winter, we started doing some work in Florida with our sister companies because we can’t work here in the winter. We have 16 crews, so we sent two to Florida, which is the first time we’ve ever done that. We’ve learned some things, and will probably do it again,” he shares.

“Some paving and asphalt companies lay off staff in winter when outdoor work slows. Brothers keeps its personnel employed year-round, a deliberate strategy to attract and retain workers.”

Although the Virginia area doesn’t get a huge amount of snow, the period from the end of Thanksgiving to mid-March poses climatic challenges. Concrete, sealcoat, and asphalt mixes that are typically used in the region come with “temperature limitations” that can cause issues if they are laid out in cold weather, Goss explains. ►►



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► Caring culture

Some paving and asphalt companies lay off staff in wintertime when outdoor work slows. Brothers takes a different approach and keeps its personnel employed year-round, part of a deliberate strategy to attract and retain workers interested in stability and career advancement. The firm extends generous benefits to staff including matching 401(k) payments, insurance, social activities, and even fitness instruction. “We have a professional body-builder who comes into the office twice a week and helps people go through workouts to stay healthy,” says Goss.

The staff is strongly encouraged to engage in continuing education and to upgrade their skills. Goss leads by

example and has studied traffic-control safety and financial documentation.

“I went to get my certification for traffic control safety, which presidents do not need. I’m not going to be the flagger on some site but I wanted to make sure I understood the processes and protocols in place for my crews, and he adds, “I’m going through financial document training. When it comes to balance sheets and income statements, I’m well-versed to do that.”

Marketing Manager Dashaun Coleman, for her part, has a drone license that enables her to take airborne photographs and videos of worksites for technical and promotional purposes.

This strategy is paying off; Brothers’ workforce has massively increased, from 140 to 150 employees at the time of the previous profile to roughly 240 today. “We’re actively looking for people all the time,” says Goss.

Former Brothers President Paul Battista set the tone for the company’s inclusive culture, says Goss, and Battista was also instrumental in establishing Brothers’ benefits package and encouraging long-term workforce loyalty. The former President of Brothers, Battista now serves on the Board of Directors for Pave America.

“It’s important that the founder of this whole thing still has his hand in operations and in decisions—it’s strategic management at board level,” says Goss. ►►



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► Keeping the values

As the company grows, Goss is eager to maintain the close-knit, supportive atmosphere established by his predecessor. "We're trying to keep the values, and the company is still family-centered," he says.

Of course, not all developments at Brothers since the previous profile were totally positive. COVID had a major effect on all North American companies, and Brothers went out of its way to keep staff safe. Some employees worked at home; cleaning processes were enhanced; and masking and COVID testing were introduced and health information disseminated.

"The leadership team met every week to review the situation and make sure we were up to speed with government regulations and things like that," adds Goss.

Surprisingly, business-wise, the pandemic gave Brothers something of a boost. Since people were inclined to stay at home, COVID provided Brothers with a window of opportunity to work on normally busy roads and parking lots. That said, COVID's lingering presence has caused supply chain woes.

"We still have major issues on the equipment side. It won't be the entire piece of equipment; it's not as though semi-trucks are not available, but it's like, we broke an axle portion that's made in Germany and now the entire truck is down because we can't get a rod. It's a big pain," says Goss. He remains highly optimistic about the future, however.

"Brothers' workforce has almost doubled, and the company is now part of Pavé America, LLC, with a nationwide reach, access to new markets, and a broader labor pool for Brothers."

If anything, the company's rapid response to COVID epitomized its long-held dedication to health and safety. "We have a series of meetings with lots of different departments and leaders. And every single week, our leadership meeting, our operations meeting, our sales meeting, and our equipment meeting, all start with a safety moment.



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The important stuff: safety

"We have a safety officer. All he does is safety, all day long, all week long. He makes sure we're OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) compliant, and we have processes in place to ensure safety that goes above and beyond OSHA requirements," says Goss.

Workers in the field start their shift with "what we call a pre-site huddle, where they all get together and point out things like power lines, or trash day—be aware of the trash trucks coming along. Whatever it may be that's unique to that site, that day. They make sure everybody's wearing their PPE," he continues.

In another safety move, the company outsources flagging and traffic safety work, so such duties are performed independently from the foreman on a site. This separation of powers is designed as a counterbalance just in case a foreman should push the crew to work at an unsafe pace.

This safety-first attitude is part of a broader, community-focused ethos. "One of our taglines is 'building better communities together.' It's kind of been our mantra. It's important to me as President that it's not just a nice saying; that we're really doing that," says Goss.

To this end, Brothers regularly assists with charitable initiatives (one recent project involved a family community shelter) and has provided private assistance to employees. It constantly tries to give as much back to the community as possible.



Facing challenges

One non-COVID-related issue that remains an ongoing challenge is labor. For all the benefits Brothers offers, finding qualified personnel can sometimes be difficult.

"There's a plethora of people who have degrees, but we don't have a lot of positions that require the kind of degrees they're coming out with—engineering and business management, which we really admire—but what we need are mechanics and heavy equipment operators, and there's a shortage," says Goss.

Labor shortages aside, Goss has big plans for Brothers and sees the company five years from now as part of a larger Pave America entity. "We're going to continue to grow. I think that growth will be organic at Brothers in Manassas as well as in the network we're part of." ■

The background of the entire page is a blurred photograph of a construction worker wearing a brown leather work glove and using a tool to work on a steel reinforcement structure. Several thick, dark steel cables are visible in the foreground and middle ground, creating a sense of depth and industrial activity.

REINFORCING THE FUTURE

— Since 1948 —



Written by
Robert Hoshowsky

1 948 was a quiet year in Canadian history—but a good one. With prosperity returning to the country, nation-building was underway, and businesses of all stripes were busy shaping what the future was to become. AGF was one such business.

Founded as Acier Gendron (Gendron Steel), the young family-owned company initially focused mainly on its home province of Quebec, but was soon taking on projects in Newfoundland. In 1999, the business merged with competitor Fertek to become Acier Gendron Fertek (AGF), significantly expanding the number of its business units. ►►

► Today, the AGF Group is one of the world's leaders in rebar, post-tensioning and concrete accessories. Its turnover has doubled every five years.

Growing over the decades mainly through acquisitions, AGF comprises 27 business units worldwide in locations in Canada, Latin America, India, France, and other nations. For the past 20 years, AGF has done one acquisition or has opened one new division per year!

“AGF is the preferred rebar supplier to many of the biggest construction firms and is involved in everything from multi-residential buildings to bridges, tunnels, rail, and other institutional and civil works.”

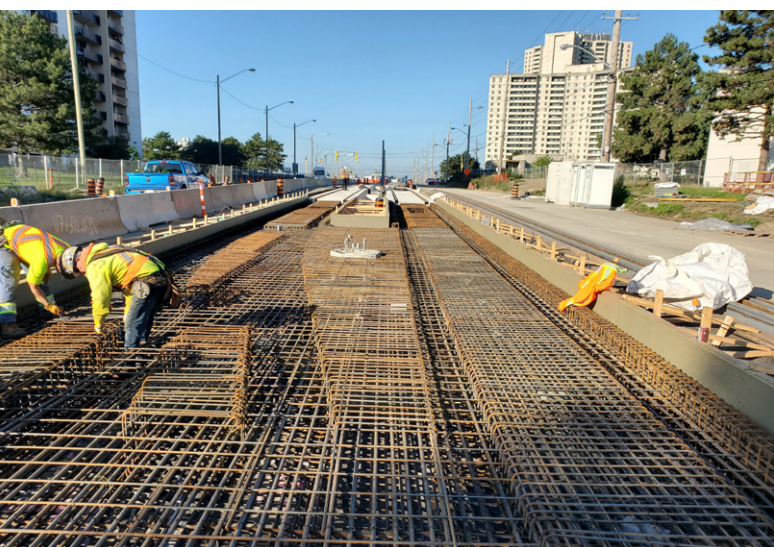
While some of AGF's growth is organic, such as its Calgary start-up, the company prefers to expand alongside other trustworthy business entities. “If they fit with our values, it's going to be easier to do an acquisition than start from scratch,” says Maxime Gendron, AGF Group's Chief Operating Officer.

“We can double up the value of acquisition with the proper help and purchasing power that we have,” says Maxime. “So we work more as a group. Once we do an acquisition, we give our new teammates all the tools they need to grow, and keep growing.”

As the preferred rebar supplier to many of the biggest construction firms, AGF is involved in projects ranging from multi-residential buildings to bridges, hospitals, tunnels, rail, and other massive institutional or civil works. These include the light rail Confederation Line in Ottawa, the new automated Réseau Express Métropolitain (REM) light rail line in Montréal, as well as the Sky Concord building, the Coxwell Bypass Tunnel, and the Finch West LRT in Toronto, just to name a few.

“Being part of such great constructions that reshape our cities is a real source of pride for our employees!” says Catherine Gendron, Chief Culture Officer.

A typical condo of 25 to 30 stories requires about 2,000 metric tons of rebar and may take just a year to build, while projects like Highway 30 out of Montréal—with 30 overpasses, tunnels, and bridges—require a four-year commitment and 44,000 MT of rebar. ►





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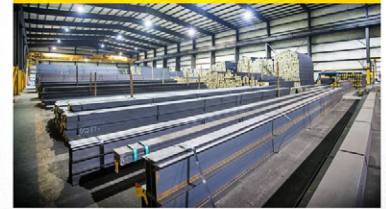
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► Expanding into other markets, AGF is also responsible for supplying rebar for the bulk of Calgary's wind farm projects. In the past four years, AGF has built over 400 wind turbine bases of about 60 MT of rebar each in Canada and abroad. As part of its ESG (environment, social, governance) program, AGF really wants to position itself as a leader in "green" projects. In the past, the company completed a few generating facilities like Muskrat Falls, La Romaine, and Churchill Falls, and thus has a strong expertise to deal with the complexity and the deadlines of those major projects. The emphasis the federal government has recently put on the future construction of new hydroelectric power stations is clearly something that AGF is watching for in the coming years.

AGF can count on the synergy between all its divisions across Canada, totalling a monthly rebar production capacity of 35,700 MT.

"When we have a project that will last for three years—and with all the volatility of the supply chain, interest rates, and shortage of labour—there are some huge risks in our industry," says Maxime. "But I'm proud to say that AGF is solid enough to counter all these risks and give our clients everything they need. We've been there for 75 years, servicing our clients and allowing them to achieve excellent results on the rebar side. We faced all those challenges in the past and have always been



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successful. Our long-term vision is about the sustainability of the business; short-term, our vision is to be leaders in Canada, both to our clients and our employees," says Maxime.

"Our long-term vision is about the sustainability of the business; short-term, our vision is to be leaders in Canada, both to our clients and our employees."

For AGF, 2023 is a landmark year, as the company celebrates its 75th anniversary. It is, says Catherine, a time both to reflect on past achievements and evaluate the company's direction and succession planning.

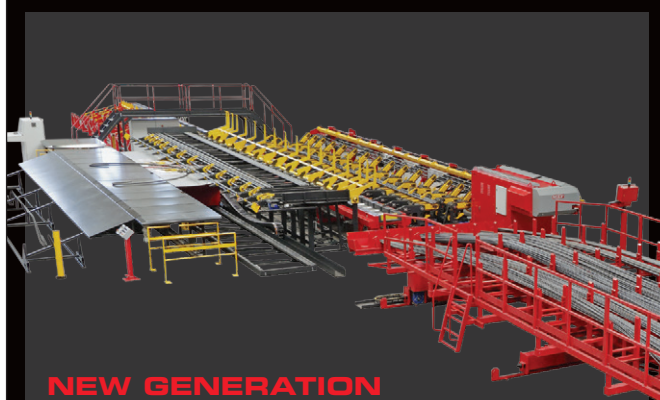
As Chief Culture Officer and General Manager—as well as General Manager of the AGF Group Foundation—Catherine knows the history of the company founded by her grandfather intimately, and also knows the importance of future-proofing the business.

AGF was not initially intended to be a family business, she says. Thirty years after it was created, her father, Serge Gendron, was asked to join, a transaction that took all of 15 minutes. ➤

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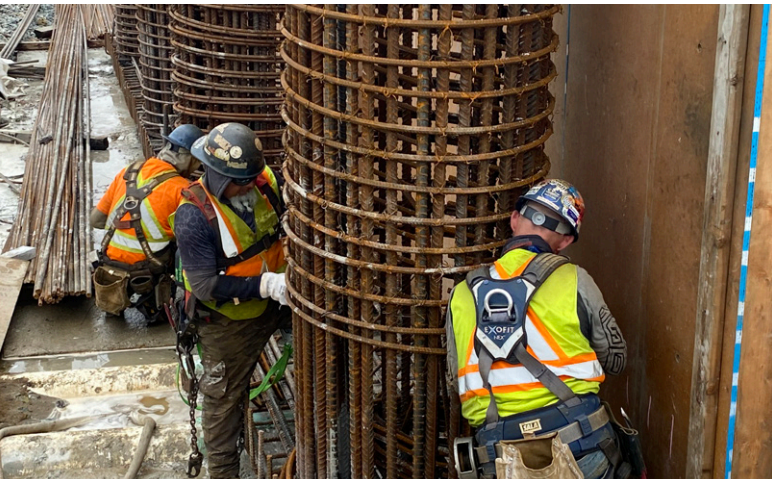
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► At AGF Group today, things are very different. About six years ago, a Family Council was put in place, an idea Serge started working on long ago. “With a 2,500-employee business, you think about transition years ahead,” says Catherine, and Maxime agrees.

“In a transition, the full company is involved. Obviously, governance in our company is important, with executive committee meetings and major project committee meetings. We have our in-house experts on the topic, always work on the structure of the business to be sustainable, and have a great focus on team players,” he explains.

Celebrating 75 years in construction, especially for a family-owned business, is an enviable milestone. With about 40,000 projects under its belt, AGF has built a strong technical knowledge of rebar and post-tensioning through its engineers, project managers, operators in the shops, and foremen on worksites.

AGF is proud of its legacy, one that started with one man and a pickup truck all those years ago. To mark this milestone, the company is planning special celebrations starting in May. Divisions in Canada and internationally will organize parties for employees and their families as well as business partners.

For years, AGF has believed in giving back to the community and fostering a culture of philanthropy among its employees. As General Manager of the AGF Group Foundation, Catherine says the company is going to use its 75th anniversary to make a major donation. “We want to recognize all the people who are part of our success and thank the community that gives us work and is also part of this success,” she says.

“What’s very particular about our Foundation is that it’s our employees and our business partners who choose where we want to have an impact in the community,” says Catherine, “so we sponsor the request of our employees. No matter how much we donate, the amount of money is not as important as the sense of purpose it gives to our AGF team members, and we strongly encourage our employees to organize fundraising activities.”

Since 2012, the AGF Group Foundation has been part of about 650 fundraising activities, with the numbers growing each week. “We’ve been able to help over 250 different charities, and that’s how—one activity at a time—we’re at the impressive amount of \$3.6 million given back to the community.”

Operating in the construction sector, AGF recognizes the importance of safety and physical health, but what about the stress of meeting tight deadlines?

The company began asking managers and employees if they felt they were equipped with the right tools to ensure their mental



health. The timing of the initiative was auspicious, since it came in 2019, shortly before the pandemic. “Mental health is also health,” says Catherine, adding that AGF has an employee and family assistance program that covers physical and mental health, and reimburses a part of physical activity expenses. “Employees perform well if they have all the tools, including mental health, in good shape.”

Other efforts nurturing physical and mental health include a gym at the head office open to all employees, and partnering with the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) in a program to ensure signs of mental illness are recognized. An important part of this program is to combat the stigma around mental health in the workplace. For AGF, adopting such an approach is simply the right thing to do.

“There’s a lot more integrity in family business because it’s not just making deals, it’s the family itself that’s showing up,” says Maxime Gendron. “We embody our values and they are the root of AGF; I think people feel it. We are entrepreneurs, and we push our employees to show their entrepreneurial skills as well. It’s all based on respect, and it’s all about people. We have been reinforcing the future since 1948 and we’ll keep on doing it as a strong team for many more years.” ■





GALVANIZE BETTER



Nick Papas
Corbec Inc. President



Marc Burrows
Corbec Inc. Vice President of Sales and Marketing

Written by William Young

Corbec is a Canadian family-owned galvanizing company now approaching 60 years in business. Founded in 1965 by Robert Hall, the company is now owned by his son John.

Company President, Nick Papas, recounts how Corbec grew from one small plant in a rented warehouse in Montreal to now operating five large state-of-the-art facilities, many of them

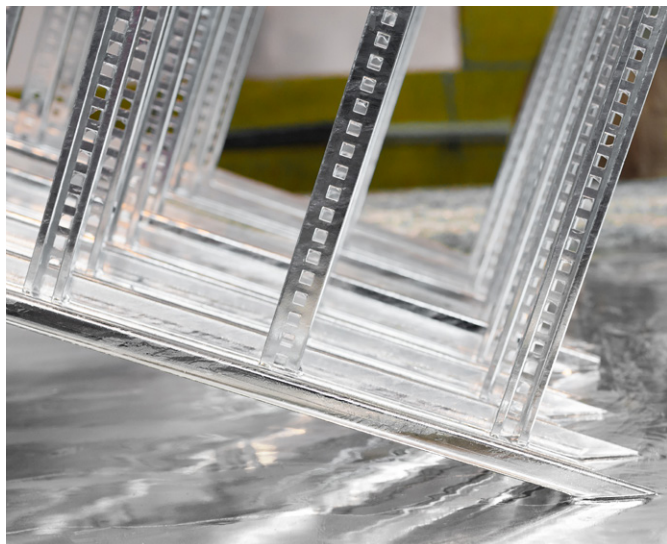
fully automated. Three of these plants dominate the Quebec galvanizing market and its more recent facilities have expanded the company's reach into the Maritimes and Ontario.

Papas affirms: "Always striving to do better is what brought us our continued success."

Galvanizing is the process of creating a surface alloy of pure zinc on steel

structures and components that are at risk of corrosion. The result is an unbeatable value equation, one that provides exceptional durability and long service life. And this service is provided at a similar or lower cost than far lower-performing paint systems.

"Galvanizing protects our national infrastructure from corrosion, ensuring an exceptionally long and nearly maintenance-free service life." ►►



► Service

The company's slogan is simply "Galvanize Better," reflecting its expertise in the field and its desire to continually raise industry standards. According to Vice President of Sales, Marc Burrows, "Corbec's prime purpose is to provide customers with trouble-free galvanizing services, providing them with the utmost in quality along with reliable service that exceeds their expectations."

"We strive to develop partnerships with customers. We want to help them develop and grow their industries by supporting their need for product diversification."

For Corbec, the company is happiest when it is developing products side-by-side with its customer partners, an approach that has brought the team a loyal clientele.

"We strive to develop partnerships with customers. We want to help them develop and grow their industries by supporting their need for product diversification," Burrows says.

To this end, the Corbec team serves as an integral partner in a client's product offer as opposed to an afterthought in the overall process—a spot to which galvanization is sometimes relegated.



Groupe Polyalto Inc

At Polyalto, we have been designing plastic solutions for 50 years, and long-term customer satisfaction has always been at the heart of our values. In this perspective, Polyalto worked hand in hand with Corbec to develop galvanization tanks made of corrosion-resistant polypropylene and to install structural FRP walkways that replace traditional steel walkways. Corbec specializes in galvanizing steel parts, which involves the use of acids in their process. The metal tanks filled with acid were susceptible to corrosion and rust, leading to potential quality issues, time loss for maintenance, and safety concerns due to corroded steel walkways surrounding the tanks. Thanks to this collaboration, Corbec was able to improve the durability, safety, and maintenance requirements of their galvanization process, while allowing Polyalto to develop new solutions for their customers.

A national name

"Corbec is a recognizable name in the industry, and we want to work on our visibility across Canada," Papas says. The result is a new emphasis on marketing, starting with the launch of a new website at the beginning of May.

In all aspects, Corbec is ably meeting the challenge of national growth, with Papas and company very confident in their ability to become a recognized market leader.

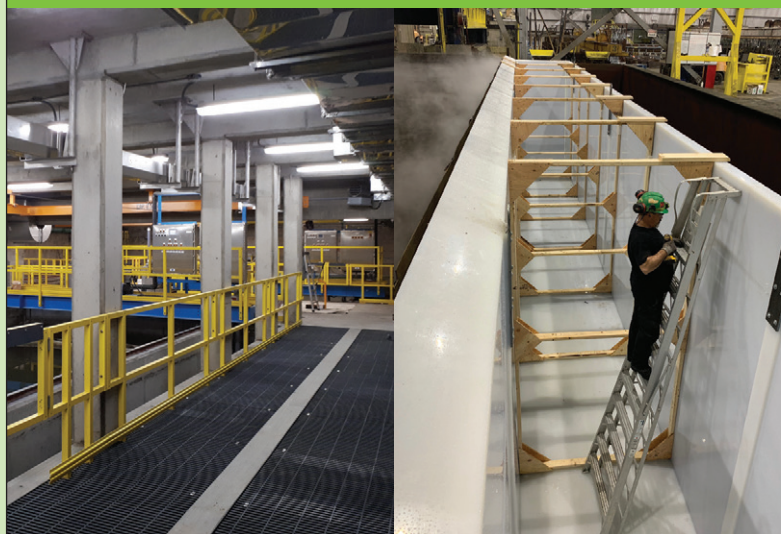
Papas muses on the question of why galvanizing is therefore not better known and its use more widespread.

"It's difficult to pinpoint one answer, but to be blunt, we as an industry must look at ourselves and admit that in an era of renewed push for environmental sustainability, we may have not been showcasing the benefits of galvanizing over other corrosion protection methods. As an industry, we also must be committed to modernizing our plants to take advantage of new technologies; this is one aspect where we have made a commitment."

Burrows expands on the Corbec difference. "[It's] not just modern automated facilities, but also an unparalleled depth of specialized personnel to assist their clients, from galvanizing compatible product design right through to support for any kind of technical challenges that might occur in the process." ➤



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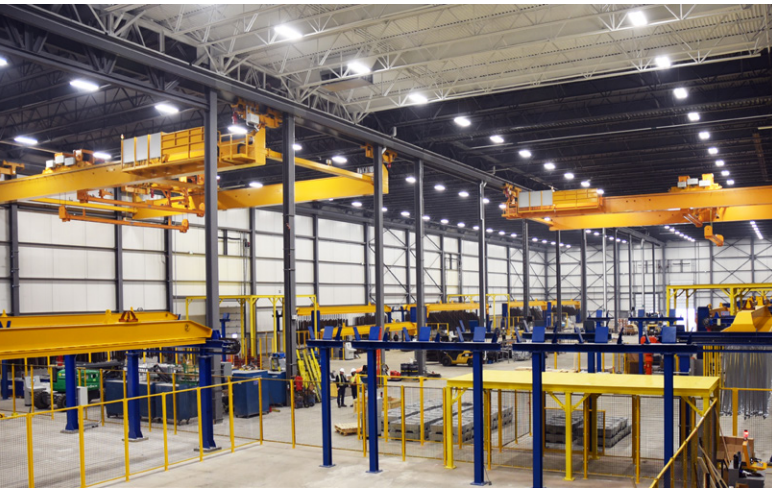
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► Stewardship

Similarly, Papas points out another Corbec difference, stewardship. Corbec plants are unique in Canada in terms of the extent to which their design protects both our environment and its employees.

“Corbec’s prime purpose is to provide customers with trouble-free galvanizing services, providing them with the utmost in quality along with reliable service that exceeds their expectations.”

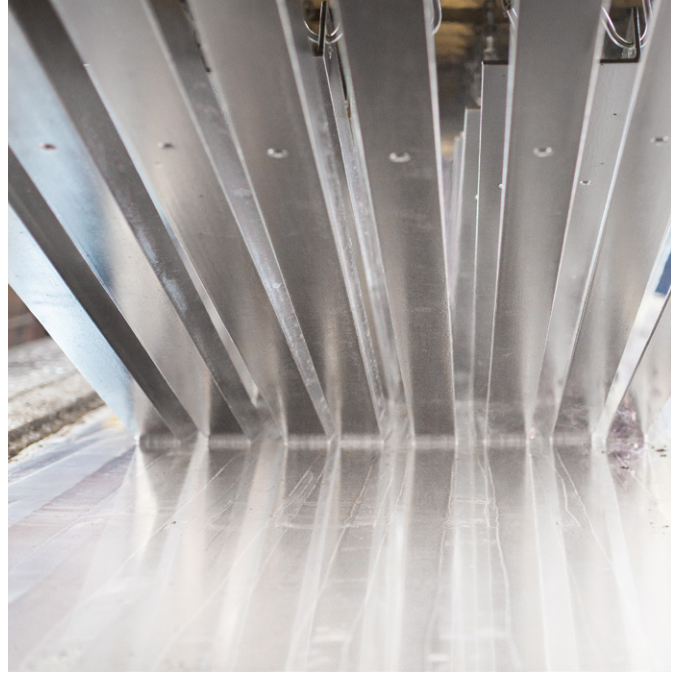
While galvanizing, as a product, is exceptionally sustainable, the process of steel cleaning and the zinc immersion itself has historically presented environmental and health safety concerns.

“Looking at our new Hamilton facility, for example, the plant design incorporates millions of dollars of technology that isolates all the pre-treatment process from employees. These systems ensure excellent air quality both inside and outside the plant as well as redundant measures that ensure no contaminants ever reach the soil or aquifers. We are the only galvanizer in Canada that has this level of environmental and safety stewardship.”

Onward

2022 saw the opening in Hamilton of the largest and most automated galvanizing plant in North America. This major venture signals Corbec's commitment to better serve the Ontario galvanizing market.

Supporting all the company's facilities are the most advanced information and process control systems in the industry. This allows Corbec to raise the standard of galvanizing service for its Canadian steel fabricators. Similarly, the recently acquired Corbec plant in Halifax is slated for a major expansion and modernization, ensuring an even higher level of service, capacity, and quality in the future.



Spirited 60

Burrows points out that despite Corbec approaching 60 years of service, the company embodies the spirit of a start-up with its commitment to continuous improvement. "We follow through on our commitments to customers by investing in our people, in our plants, and in our technologies."

Perhaps Papas sums it up best by saying that, "Galvanize Better" is the ultimate litmus test for any decision the company may make going forward: "Does it advance our ultimate goal of further differentiating ourselves versus the industry?"

The way forward looks bright, as Corbec enters its sixth decade of operations, as enthusiastic and positive as ever about its future. ■



Content Developed by Louis Susara





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Celebrating what started as a fateful night over a bottle of whisky in 1973, 50 years on, Western Pacific Enterprises Ltd. is one of British Columbia's largest electrical contractors and a leading member of MYR Group, a holding firm of eleven subsidiaries and just shy of ten thousand employees. Despite the size of its parent company, Western Pacific Enterprises retains the family values, attention to detail, and personal relationships on which its reputation was built.

Dieter Fettback (left),
Ernie Moore (right) & CC
Western Pacific Enterprises





Written by Pauline Müller

Over five decades, the founders of Western Pacific Enterprises instilled in their descendants and staff a remarkable work ethic and appreciation for quality workmanship.

This has secured longstanding relationships with some of Canada's most respected and largest firms, running almost entirely on business garnered from customer referrals and return business. The company is also proud of its environmental and social conscience that protects its clients, the environment, and its communities.

Headquartered in Surrey, British Columbia, the company's capabilities are nothing short of impressive, running the gamut from equipping substations in remote regions across Western Canada to large healthcare facilities, convention centres, power distribution plants, SkyTrain stations, and even the world-class BC Place stadium, home of the BC Lions of the Canadian Football League, with all the electrical components and services needed to run such operations. Beyond its electrical installations, the company is trusted by customers for controls and automation installations, data systems installation, certification and management, and much more. ►►

► “Our approach to estimating, expanding our service division, and superb offerings are causing people to pick up the phone and invite us to be part of their projects,” says Vice President Derek Fettback.

Safety plays a significant role in the company's ethos, its approach to its people, and its work. The care and dedication have landed the company many prestigious awards over the years, including the 2021 Canadian Construction Association National Safety Award for demonstrated achievements and commitments to safety in the construction workplace. Western Pacific was also honoured by Technical Safety British Columbia with the Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia Safety Award for data and digital technology in technical safety in 2018.

In addition to being known by employees for its progressive safety policies, Western Pacific Enterprises is also favoured as an employer of choice by many women in the electrical industry because women are respected as equals and enjoy the same opportunities as men in the firm. This achievement is still a battle for many women working in traditionally male-oriented industries across North America.



The company has always been known for strategic, steady growth. Yet, its very existence is thanks to a rather calculated gamble taken by its founders based on their accumulated experience. When Dieter Fettback and Ernie Moore decided in 1973 to mortgage their homes to make their dream of setting up an electrical contracting company a reality, they did not expect it to become such a great success so fast. Western Pacific Enterprises was incorporated on July 12, 1973. By the 1980s, it had built a reputation for concluding commercial, civil, and industrial projects efficiently, safely, and within budget.

“Western Pacific Enterprises is as committed to giving generously to its communities as it is to providing service excellence.”

The team's penchant for problem-solving and innovation soon started landing increasingly high-profile projects with significant amounts of responsibility. With the responsibility came one great fortune: the company was positioned at the forefront of the action when Vancouver started transforming itself into an urban haven during the years leading up to the booming nineties. Winning the coveted SkyTrain project in the wake of Expo 86 was one of the deciding projects it won and was no small matter at the time.

Under this contract, the company provided power, signalling, lighting, and communication systems for the star train infrastructure installation of the 1986 World Expo on Transportation and Communication. The high-speed railway line joins downtown Vancouver with New Westminster and Surrey.

Sadly, and at a great loss to the company, founder Ernie Moore passed away in 1989. Ernie's son Hal, along with Dieter's sons, became partners and continued the family legacy, and together, they have grown the company to its position as one of the largest contracting firms in Western Canada.

During the 1990s, an existing client, BC Hydro, signed the firm for several projects erecting new substations. These projects brought the company tremendous growth throughout the nineties right into the new millennium.

As 2010 heralded a new era with the company signing contracts for electrical and security installations for the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games in Whistler and Vancouver, the second generation of owners was set for long-term success. During this time, the company also had the opportunity to work on the BC Place Stadium and the Vancouver Convention Centre.



Western Pacific Enterprises was on a winning streak. The global event provided yet another opportunity for the company to show its mettle when it landed the deal for the electrical work on the Canada Line, a light rail line providing easy airport access from Richmond. All the projects were finished to its signature high standards and on time, of course.

Two of its all-time most impressive projects were the Heathfield and Newell converter stations in northern and southern Alberta. "I think these were the biggest contracts we had signed to date," says Derek. "At the peak, we had about 450 electricians at Heathfield and the same number at Newell, with a combined weekly payroll of around \$2 million. At the same time, we did underground work on the two stations for the western transmission line."

Logistics pressures on this project were considerable, with nearly ten safety officers working two shifts and heavy equipment being deluged with mud, making work a nightmare. The stakes were high, but the project was a success.

In 2016, the company was acquired by MYR Group, giving it access to a new level of financial, legal, management, equipment, and technology resources. That, in turn, provided renewed leverage with which to take on larger and more ➤





► complex projects. Putting the latest technology to good use on its projects came naturally, and so, 3D modeling and all the capabilities this allows have been a part of its offering since the advent of this powerful design tool. Combined with the internet of things, this forms the core of smart building systems around the world.

Together, these two technologies and the team's attention to detail formed the basis of its work on The Post project, perhaps Canada's most significant heritage redevelopment project to date. Originally home to Vancouver's mail-sorting facility, the building was transformed by its new owner to give the city an avant-garde, modern office, and commercial rental space with all the latest modern conveniences as well as the human connection that many people crave following COVID-19.

"When we are asked for a budget, we respond, 'How about we give you more than a budget? How about electrical drawings along with our number?'" says Andrew Fettback, while relating how impressed the general contractor on The Post project was with the team's technical drawings.

"Our approach to estimating, expanding our service division, and superb offerings are causing people to pick up the phone and invite us to be part of their projects."

With its history as a family-owned business, the company continues to value its teams. "Employees work better if they are included in the decision-making process," says Dave Fettback, former president and Electrical Contractors Association of British Columbia's Hall of Fame honouree.

"That is part of encouraging teamwork," Director of Safety and Procurement Wayne Fettback adds. "The company's biggest strength is the people who work here. A lot of them have been in the business for twenty-five to thirty years."

During the downtimes, the company has always prided itself on retaining as many people as possible. While everyone knew that staying on meant pitching in to do work that may not be a part of their job description, the sense of family here is so strong that people have always pulled together and done what was needed to get the company through those slow periods.

"Employees stay here because they are treated well, and they also respect the values of the company and feel that they are an important part of making Western Pacific successful," remarks President Tom Butterfield.

Western Pacific Enterprises is as committed to giving generously to its communities as it is to providing service excellence. One of its largest contributions to date was in 2022 when it donated its construction management and electrical skills alongside \$12,500 in capital, nearly 340 hours in equipment labour, and 616 hours in human labour provided by thirteen of the company's best professionals to a worthy cause. The project comprised distribution line and underground cable as well as communication installation that connects Honour Ranch near Ashcroft, British Columbia, to the BC Hydro distribution network, eliminating generator-reliant power for the 120-acre facility where Canadian armed forces personnel, veterans, emergency services personnel, and their loved ones are treated for service-related trauma.

The company also gives generously to the Kids Help Phone as part of recognizing Pink Shirt Day, doing its bit to root out bullying by supporting anti-bullying programs in schools, at home, and in the workplace. It has also given support to the Greater Vancouver Food Bank and the Canadian Red Cross Flood Relief.

As modern technology advances, Western Pacific Enterprises intends to stay ahead of the electrical and technological services curve. "By emphasizing our critical role in the clean energy transformation, we contribute to a more sustainable future for all," the company states in its celebratory coffee table book commemorating its 50th anniversary. That means growing and evolving along with and sometimes ahead of its customers' needs. Backed by the solid business prowess of MYR Group, the company, and its teams are ready to embrace the changes. ■



Content Developed by Wendy Hood-Morris





CALIFORNIA'S LARGEST PROVIDER of Restroom Partitions and Accessories

Written by Nate Hendley

Stumbaugh & Associates, Inc., of Burbank, California, has been on a growth streak over the past few years with big increases in revenue and personnel. The company has become the leading provider of restroom accessories and partitions in the state of California and is eager to continue growing. The achievements are even more impressive given its very humble origins nearly sixty years ago.

"We supply everything in the restroom that does not have water running through it. We don't do the toilet; we don't do the sink; we don't we do the faucet, but we do everything else you need in a commercial restroom," explains Tami Burgess, Vice President of Business Development.

The category of restroom partitions and accessories covers quite a wide gamut of products. Partitions can come in a variety of colors including almond, white, silver, platinum grey, and stainless steel. Accessories range from baby changing stations to grab bars, dispensers for paper towels, toilet tissue and soap, waste receptacles, and more.

The company offers these wares as a Division 10 specialties sub-contractor. Commercial construction work is segmented into multiple divisions, with Division 10 covering specialty products which are generally pre-made and installed on the job site.

"We're not a manufacturer. As a distributor, we purchase from the manufacturers, and we sell a package to the general contractor that includes the material and our installation services," she states.

Installation work is entirely handled by a unionized workforce as Stumbaugh is associated with sheet metal and carpenter unions. The company is licensed to work in California at present, and given that state's immense population, there is no shortage of projects. It has worked at sports stadiums, museums, schools, art galleries, and amusement parks—"anywhere a commercial restroom is needed," as Burgess puts it.

The company also does some residential projects for assisted living facilities and apartment complexes. "We're seeing a really big push on high-rise apartment condo living with retail space on the first floor. So, we do that sort of residential, but not individual homes. We're seeing a lot of [apartment condo development] in San Francisco and in the Greater Los Angeles area. More metropolitan, rather than suburban," she says.

The firm was founded in 1965 by Richard Stumbaugh in Alhambra, California. At first, it worked from what Burgess calls "a little 3,000-square-foot office."

It grew, and eventually moved its headquarters to Burbank. From there, Stumbaugh & Associates opened offices in San Diego in 2011, Fremont in 2016, and Sacramento in 2019.

At present, it has a 17,000-square-foot warehouse in Burbank and 10,000 square feet of office space, with plans to expand the latter soon. Richard Stumbaugh is now the chairman of the board, and company ownership has passed to his son Jeff Stumbaugh and son-in-law Mark Herzer. The intent is to keep this a family business. ►►



► The company is conducting market research in the Fresno area, and if all goes to plan, it might open a satellite office in that city within a year and a half. A more long-range plan could see Stumbaugh expand outside of California into other Western states.

Impressive sales growth is driving this expansion. “In 2012, we were a \$15 million company with forty-six employees. In 2022, ten years later, we were a \$34 million company, with just over one hundred employees,” Burgess notes.

Interestingly, the firm does minimal promotion. “Our reputation precedes us. Having been the biggest player for as many years as we have, everybody knows us. The contractors come to us for bids. We don’t have to seek out jobs,” she states.

The company does maintain certain prerequisites for new hires. “We’re always hopeful for someone who has some experience in the construction industry... but aside from that, it’s important to have people who are team players. We all work closely together. We have project managers who have their team of assistants. We have accounting departments. We all definitely meld,” Burgess says.

One key factor that has led to the company’s longevity would be customer-service. The company takes a hands-on approach, from reviewing plans to bidding, acquiring partitions and accessories, and installing them. Typically, it works with general contractors on projects and operates in an extremely important—but often overlooked—niche.

“Every building needs a restroom to open, but the restrooms are a small part of the project. A lot of the time, architects forget about us. They don’t always specify all the materials required,” she points out.

Stumbaugh tries to ensure that specifications are complete and meet code. Clients “know they’re getting a complete package that’s going to meet all ADA [Americans with Disabilities Act] codes and is going to look good and function well. Our knowledge and history really give us the ability to deliver, no matter what we’ve had to start with,” says Burgess.

Workplace loyalty has also been central to the firm’s longevity. “We have been successful at keeping a family-owned business mentality. We’ve grown into a very large company ... but the employees are very important to us. We take care of employees.”

The company strongly supports the concept of maintaining a healthy work/life balance. It can be flexible with work hours, for example, allowing employees to watch their kids play soccer in the afternoon or take in another family activity. Employees clearly appreciate this approach, and the company boasts several workers who have been here for years.

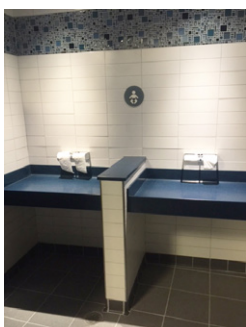
This progressive spirit extends to Stumbaugh’s history of charitable giving. The firm often participates in or donates money to events organized by its major contractors. One such contractor, for example, hosts a golf tournament each year to raise funds for charity. It also recently completed a project for a YMCA that included a donation to the organization.

For all the company’s forward momentum, the COVID pandemic proved to be hugely disruptive. “We went down a couple of million dollars in sales in the year 2020,” says Burgess.

“The company has worked at sports stadiums, museums, schools, art galleries, and amusement parks—anywhere a commercial restroom is needed.”

It quickly pivoted, however, sending its office accounting team home to work remotely, while streamlining administrative paperwork and processes. Face-to-face communication was often replaced by email, texts, and phone calls. Some projects were put on hold, but overall Stumbaugh got through the worst of the pandemic in decent shape.

In fact, “we found we were able to improve a lot of our processes—be more efficient, have a little less paperwork. We were doing more things electronically,” Burgess recalls.



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This attitude fits with the company's reputation for high standards and quality. Products it orders must pass stringent quality control inspections at the factory of origin before being shipped. Once partitions and accessories are unloaded and unboxed at Stumbaugh facilities, they are checked again for dents, scratches, and other damage. Only then are partitions and accessories installed.

"Ultimately, it falls on the installers to make sure they are leaving the job with nice, clean, new, undamaged material installed per handicap codes, per specifications, per plans," she says.

The washroom accessory and partition manufacturing sector is relatively small, so Stumbaugh works with a handful of regular suppliers. It helps that Bobrick, one of the oldest and largest washroom equipment manufacturers in America, happens to be located "two miles from our office," says Burgess.

"We stock a lot of [Bobrick] accessories in our warehouse. When we have people come in and need something quick, we typically have it in our warehouse. If not, we can get it in a day or two," she continues.

Given how long the firm has been in business, its list of completed projects contains a great deal of impressive, high-profile work. Among other contracts, Stumbaugh has provided restroom partitions and accessories for medical provider Kaiser, UPS, the Getty Museum, Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), Dodger Stadium, Disneyland, casinos, art galleries, and academic buildings.

Heading into the future, the company is thinking of "expanding into more of the Division 10 products on a regular basis. Typically, we will add some of these extra items if the contractor asks us to," says Burgess. These might include signage, fire equipment, projection screens, or shelving. The company may also launch a manufacturing division to produce restroom countertops.

Of course, challenges remain ahead. In addition to the lingering impact of COVID, there is a great deal of economic uncertainty across North America. "Are we going to be going into a little bit of a recession? Are we going into a big recession?" she asks. For all that, Burgess is very optimistic about the future of the company. "Five years down the road, I would [see us] supplying a complete Division 10 big package. We have definitely opened up a Fresno office, and we hopefully have an office in Arizona and/or Oregon." ■

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