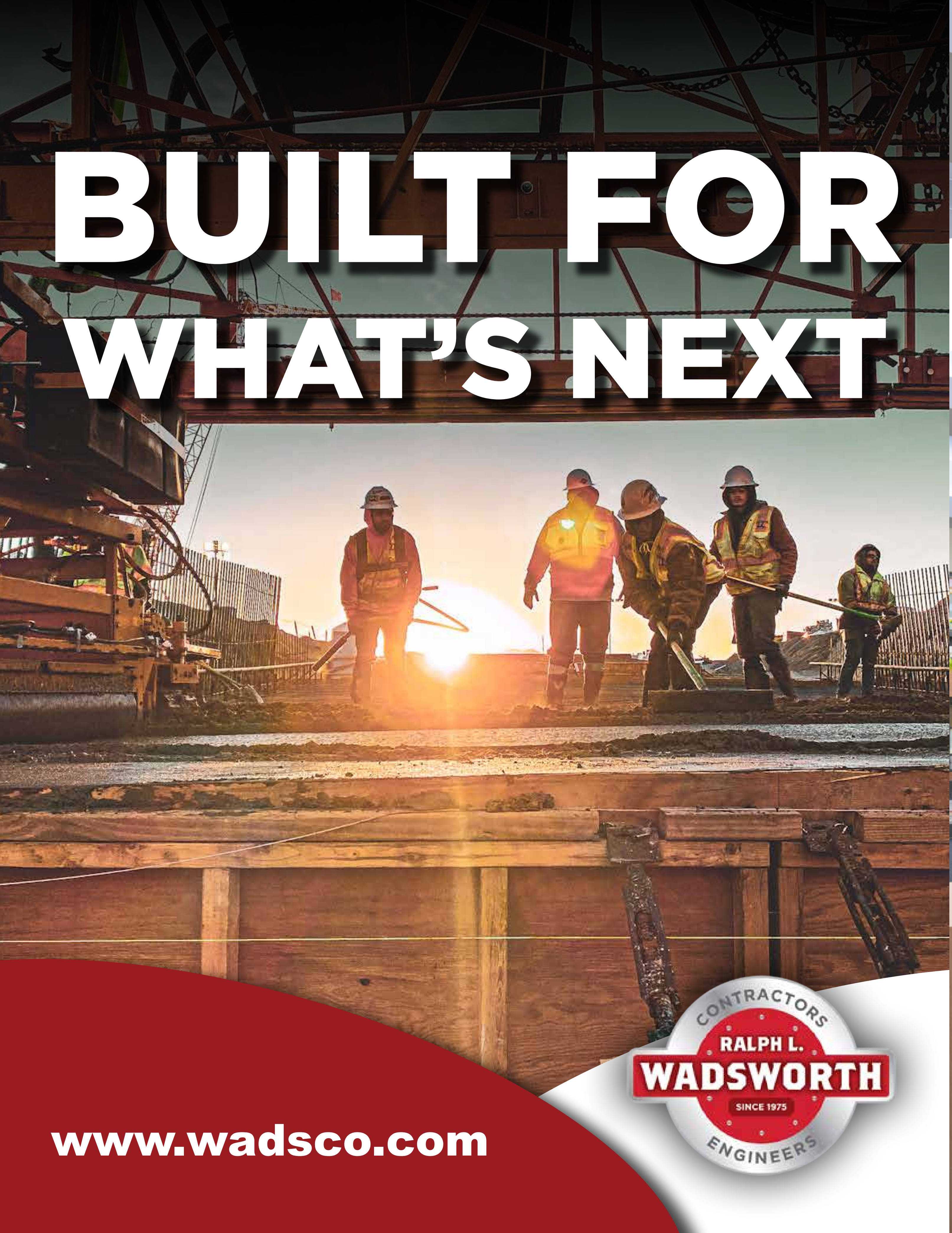
UTAH CONSTRUCTION + DESIGN

MAY | JUNE 2026

50 x 3

UC+D profiles three local architecture firms celebrating historic 50th anniversaries.

+ Multifamily Trends & Projects
+ Owner Spotlight: St. John Properties
+ ABC Utah EIC Awards
+ Western Sports Park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Features

On the cover: Three iconic projects from each of the three firms celebrating 50th anniversaries (top to bottom): Weber County Library, Southwest Branch in Roy (Pathe Studio Architects); Weber | Blackstone Corporate Headquarters in Providence (Jacoby Architects); BioFire Diagnostics Facility in Salt Lake (FFKR Architects). (images courtesy of each respective firm)


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76


88


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114

Data Center Conundrum

Some would say I was a lost man in a lost world
You could say I lost my faith in the people on TV
You could say I lost my belief in our politicians
They all seemed like game show hosts to me
—Sting, "If I Ever Lose My Faith," Ten Summoner Tales (1993)

Perhaps the state's most controversial development project in recent history—an enormous data center campus in rural Box Elder County being developed by celebrity investor Kevin O'Leary, nicknamed "Mr. Wonderful" from his role since 2009 on the popular television show *Shark Tank*—has yet to be fully approved.

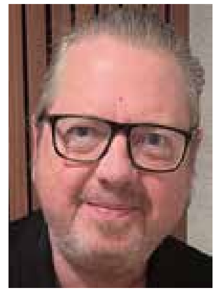
The proposed **Stratos Project** is a hyperscale data center proposed by O'Leary—a quasi "game show host" worth a reported $400 million—was initially brokered with Utah's **Military Installation Development Authority (MIDA)**, an entity created in 2007 by the Utah Legislature to support economic development projects that allegedly benefits defense-related industries and communities associated with military installations, but has since expanded into other development types. MIDA is run by only seven voting members, including two powerful, long-in-the tooth legislators—Utah Senate President Stuart Adams and Jerry Stevenson, whose public images have taken a hit because of the fallout over this project, mainly due to blowback from Box Elder residents who felt blindsided because of the decision to rubber stamp its approval in April with *zero* public input.

The original size of the project—40,000 acres (over 60 square miles) —flat-out scares people, and rightfully so. That size of a project would require *9 gigawatts* of electricity—enough power to send Marty McFly and his souped-up DeLorean ping-ponging back and forth between the past and future seven times. The entire state of Utah, by comparison, uses approximately 4 gigawatts *annually*. Potential negative environmental ramifications include worse air quality—a health concern often ignored by politicians—and exorbitant water use, as Utah's current drought situation is alarming to say the least.

Public outcry has been so strong that it caused Adams to backtrack from whatever original deal O'Leary claims was agreed to, with the two sides now compromising to 20,000 acres, with the other 20,000 acres around the Locomotive Springs Wildlife Area in Hansel Valley being preserved as "green space". *It is unknown at this point how much power and water the project will ultimately use, nor other environmental impacts.*

Utah Governor Spencer Cox issued an executive order after sensing public displeasure, establishing new statewide rules for future data center development, including a greater need for environmental considerations and public transparency.

I have a few opinions on this brave new world of AI and future data center construction in Utah. One, progress will not be stopped. What AI is today is what the internet was 35 years ago: it needs to be embraced and utilized in a responsible manner. Two, I'm all for the Beehive State benefitting from whatever income can be generated by these behemoth projects to enrich local city budgets and/or reduce residents' property taxes. Three, new data center construction projects can benefit a host of designers and contractors. Four, politicians gunning for data centers to be built need to tone down the rhetoric that the U.S. needs to "keep up with China" less we fall behind in the AI race. I'm sure the U.S. will do just fine building a zillion square feet of data centers in the next decade. Personally, I fear the damage being done economically *($5/gallon gas?!)* and socially *(anti-woke nonsense)* by the out-of-touch Trump administration far more than any threat—real or imagined—from China.



Having attended a steel topping off ceremony a couple months ago at one of five planned buildings at the massive **QTS** data center campus in **Eagle Mountain**, I saw firsthand the impact of such a project—including the employment of thousands of craft workers and local community leaders who said they were thrilled to have the project in their city. Only time will tell of the positive impact it has on long-term employment opportunities and tax revenue. If data center projects are done right, with full transparency and minimal negative environmental impacts on air quality and water usage, bring it on.

This issue of ***UC+D*** is *packed* with a ton of excellent content, a testament to our desire as a publication to give our readers more bang for the buck. Our cover story profiles three Utah-based architecture firms celebrating their respective 50th Anniversaries. Congratulations to **FFKR Architects**, **Jacoby Architects**, and **Pathe Studio Architects** (formerly Prescott Muir Architects) on this notable milestone—a testament to each firm's prowess and resilience over a half century.

We also profile Ogden-based general contractor **KIER Construction** as it marks its 40th Anniversary. KIER has established itself over the past 15 years as one of the state's premier commercial builders—particularly in the multifamily market—with a host of high-profile projects completed across the Wasatch Front.

Our **Industry News** section is particularly robust, with content on **Convergence Hall**, **Okland Construction** embracing ESOP, the ongoing transformation of the **Delta Center**, the groundbreaking of a new $300 million **Highland High School**, and a recap of the **Operation Gigawatt Summit** from May 22.

Other content includes a recap of the **Associated Builders and Contractors' Excellence in Construction Awards**, which includes a profile of ABC Utah's current Chairman of the Board, **Craig Madsen** of J&M Steel Solutions.

We also examine local **Multifamily Trends**, including project features on three new exciting apartment buildings: **The Gauge**, **MILLHAUS**, and **The Vue at Desert Color**.

Two unique community-driven projects in this issue are **Western Sports Park** in Farmington and the **Boys & Girls Club of Northern Utah Community Campus** in Brigham City.

Finally, we profile developer **St. John Properties (SJP)**, a firm originally established in Baltimore 55 years ago by Edward St. John, who at 88 is still actively engaged in building out an empire with assets valued north of $5 billion and spanning projects totaling more than 25 million square feet. Regional Partner **Daniel Thomas** opened SJP's Utah office in 2014, and the firm has flourished the past dozen years, highlighted by its Valley Grove development in Pleasant Grove.

As always, we appreciate the many firms who continue to support our cause via display advertising and timely editorial contributions—we don't exist without you. Enjoy the content!

Regards,

Bradley Fullmer

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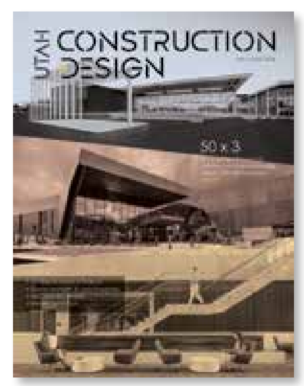

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Coming in the July/August issue of *UC+D*:
2026 Top Utah GC Rankings
Anniversary Profiles:
Clyde 100th; Wadman 75th
U of U Sorenson Innovation Center

Convergence Hall Will Serve as "Innovation Anchor" for The Point

Okland incorporating ESOP into ownership structure; Layton, QTS host data center steel 'topping out' ceremony; SEG announces major Delta Center upgrades; Hogan breaks ground on new Highland High; KFK Center earns LEED Gold status; Jacobsen breaks ground on Life Time project.

Convergence Hall at The Point will serve as an "innovation hub" for the state, a dynamic six-story, 100,000-SF building that will be completed Q1 2029. (rendering courtesy The Point)

At the center of Utah's most ambitious current redevelopment effort, a new project is taking shape that will define what the future of innovation, collaboration and economic development could look like along the Wasatch Front.

Known as Convergence Hall, the planned innovation campus at The Point in Draper is envisioned as far more than a standalone building. Project leaders are positioning it as the intellectual and collaborative centerpiece of the entire 600-acre transformation of the former Utah State Prison site at Point of the Mountain—a development expected to become one of the most significant mixed-use districts in the western United States.

Designed by Salt Lake-based FFKR Architects and Los Angeles-based Gensler, Convergence Hall aims to bring together higher education, private industry, startups, government agencies, and investment capital within a single innovation-focused environment intended to accelerate research, commercialization and entrepreneurial growth. Other design team members include Salt Lake-based Lynk Engineers, Sandy-based LERA Consulting Structural Engineers, and Ogden-based Cape Civil.

> "When you can get smart people together, and they're bouncing ideas off each other, it changes things. We see exponential growth coming out of that space. Before you know it, you're solving the world's problems."
>
> —Governor Spencer Cox

Publicly released concepts and project descriptions portray a highly flexible, technology-driven facility centered around collaboration and interdisciplinary engagement. As the project is still being designed, final specifications and costs have not yet been publicly finalized. However, industry discussions surrounding it have consistently pointed toward a six-story, 100,000-SF innovation campus with a development cost potentially exceeding $150 million.

The project is the brainchild of Jefferson Moss, Executive Director of Utah Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity and Innovation District Project Director for The Point, who traveled far and wide researching similar innovation campuses, including MIT Media Lab in Boston, Bakar Bio Labs in Berkeley, and STATION F in Paris.

Moss, who also serves as Executive Director of the Nucleus Institute, said at an April 30 Innovation Education Conference that Convergence Hall will be "bringing together all of these universities to be able to collaborate, to where you can have a researcher sitting next to a policymaker sitting next to an entrepreneur to really try to solve the biggest problems that we see in the world today."

"Innovation is not the goal, it's a means to something much bigger," said Utah Governor Spencer Cox "We're building opportunities. Utah has always punched above its weight. What we care about is human flourishing—the pursuit of collaboration to make life better. I'm so excited about Convergence Hall. The concept of ideas. When you can get smart people together, and they're bouncing ideas off each other, it changes things. We see exponential growth coming out of that space. Before you know it, you're solving the world's problems."

Unlike a conventional office tower or academic building, Convergence Hall is being designed around the concept of "convergence"—the intentional intersection of education, government and private enterprise.

Plans for the facility include innovation labs, a mix of corporate, innovation, investor, government, and student programs , startup incubator space for 200-plus businesses, advanced technology research environments, 200-plus dorm rooms, event spaces, and more—all tied to Utah universities and emerging technology sectors. Publicly discussed concepts have also referenced artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, energy innovation, and life sciences as key target industries.

Renderings show expansive glazing, activated pedestrian environments, and strong indoor-outdoor connectivity integrated into the broader urban fabric of The Point.

"The building is going to (include) a combination of academia, industry, and government together—we're going to have multiple resources in one building," said Angela Smith, COO for Nucleus Institute. "We want government and industry acting and working together [...] and this building is a space for all that to happen. Convergence Hall is built for Utah, but it's also an opportunity for us to think globally."

Okland Expanding Ownership to Employees While Remaining Family-Led

Salt Lake-based Okland Construction, a family-owned and privately held general contractor since its founding in 1918, recently announced the expansion of its ownership structure to include its team members through an Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP).

The announcement came during Okland's semi-annual company meeting, marking a defining moment as the firm transitions to employee ownership, creating new opportunities for those shaping the company's future while continuing its legacy of craftsmanship and a commitment to creating remarkable experiences for its people and the communities it serves.

"What started as a family business is still a family business. That hasn't changed and it's not going to change," said Bill Okland, CEO of Okland Construction. "This decision is about strengthening that foundation, not replacing it. The people who have helped us grow now [can] share in that success."

Under the new structure, Okland will remain family-led, with its leadership team, operations, and long-term strategy unchanged. Designed as a long-term retirement benefit that compliments existing compensation and benefits for the 1,300 construction professionals it employs across the Southwest and Mountain West, the partial ESOP introduces a way for team members to participate in the company's future through a company-funded ownership benefit designed to build long-term value over time.

"This isn't a sale of the company, and it doesn't change who we are," said Brett Okland, President. "We're not stepping away. We're leaning in. What's changing in who shares in our success we create together, what's not changing is the remarkable experience we strive to create for our clients, partners, and community."

Layton Construction, QTS Mark "Topping Out" of Third Building at Giant Eagle Mountain Data Center

As steel crews guided the final beam into place high above the vast Eagle Mountain landscape, more than 2,000 construction workers gathered beneath the rising structures of what has quickly become one of Utah's most ambitious technology infrastructure projects to date.

On April 17, contractors, elected officials and executives from Sandy-based Layton Construction and Overland Park, Kansas-based QTS Data Centers celebrated the steel topping-out ceremony for the QTS Eagle Mountain campus—a multi-building hyperscale data center development that represents a $6 billion investment and a major expansion of Utah's digital infrastructure economy.

Located near the existing Meta campus in Eagle Mountain, the first phase of the project spans roughly 193 acres and includes five planned data center buildings. The initial three buildings—each ranging from approximately 579,000 to 592,000 SF—are currently under construction and expected to be completed later this year.

For Dave Layton, the topping-out ceremony represented far more than a structural milestone.

"I wore my safety Carhartts this morning because, as you all know, safety is of prime importance to us," said Layton,››

Crews hoist the final steel beam—replete with traditional tree—during a topping out ceremony April 17 at the massive QTS Data Center campus in Eagle Mountain. (photos courtesy Layton Construction) long-time President/CEO of Layton Construction. "I want to begin by thanking the men and women who show up every day—dependable, committed, loyal and hardworking—because you're doing it safely and with quality. That matters."

Layton emphasized the scale and speed of the undertaking, noting that construction crews have been on site since last September, while simultaneously erecting multiple large-scale data center structures.

"How is this all possible?" he asked. "It starts with every one of you. We could not do what we're doing here without your commitment and dedication to deliver an outstanding project."

Executives with QTS said the project is designed to serve growing national demand for cloud computing, artificial intelligence, and large-scale digital storage infrastructure.

"It's humbling to stand in front of this group," said Lane Anderson, Executive Vice President for QTS. "I've been in this industry for more than 25 years, and to look out and see the talent and commitment here really puts into perspective what we're building together."

According to Anderson, the Eagle Mountain campus represents QTS's first major data center investment in Utah and is intended to be part of a broader long-term presence in the state.

"This project marks the third of what will be five data centers here—facilities designed to be highly efficient with no water use and a strong impact on the local economy," Anderson added. "That's the kind of development we want to see more of here in Utah and across the country."

QTS has repeatedly emphasized that the system will not continuously draw from local water supplies for cooling purposes, with company officials saying the Eagle Mountain campus will utilize a closed-loop cooling system designed to avoid ongoing water consumption once operational.

The project arrives as Utah continues to emerge as a significant national data center market due to its access to fiber connectivity, relatively low natural disaster risk, growing power infrastructure, and expanding technology economy. Industry analysts estimate that multiple new data center projects currently under construction statewide could add thousands of megawatts of future capacity by 2028.

Smith Entertainment Group recently unveiled renderings showing the future transformation of the Delta Center in downtown Salt Lake, a significant construction project that will occur during the 2026 and 2027 offseasons for the NBA and NHL. (images courtesy SEG)

SEG Unveils Next Steps in Remarkable Transformation of SLC's Famed Delta Center

As the ground-up transformation of the Delta Center into a world-class, dual-sport venue continues, Sandy-based Smith Entertainment Group (SEG) shared new construction details May 8 for the 2026 and 2027 offseasons. These major changes build on SEG's vision to take the Delta Center to the next level as one of the most electric environments in the NBA and NHL.

Every enhancement has been intentionally designed to elevate the experience for all types of guests—from lifelong season ticket holders to first-time attendees; and business clients and their hosts; those hosting business clients or families ready to enjoy a game or event. When complete, every seat throughout the arena will be replaced and reconfigured to ensure full sight lines for both basketball and hockey.

After this offseason, the Delta Center's upper-north end zone will feature new terrace-style ledges with full-view seating that extends the energy and feel of the lower bowl and creates a more connected and immersive experience for fans.

In addition, suspended "gondolas" will be built up along both sidelines, providing a captivating bird's-eye view of the event floor for over 200 fans while offering amazing hospitality and gathering spaces.

The parking structure at the southwest corner of the arena will be completed before the 2026-27 season.

Major construction in 2027 will introduce a dynamic slope design, connecting the upper and lower levels starting from the floor and working upward. With positioning near the visiting bench, the slope will provide fans in these sections an even more intense environment right on top of the action, helping further the tradition of the Delta Center being one of the loudest places to play in the NBA and NHL.

Renovations to suites begin on the north side in 2026 and will be completed in 2027, bringing refreshed interior design and extending suite spaces throughout Level 4 of the building.

Additional upgrades and renovations include adding food and beverage options, updating concourses and concession locations with new and redesigned social areas, adding bathroom capacity, and expanding club spaces around the building. Future plans also include adding a new main entrance and outdoor plaza that will serve as a gateway to the heart of downtown.

SEG is working with four groups to help drive the Delta Center transformation project: Salt Lake-based Okland Construction is the general contractor; New York-based SCI Architects is the lead design firm; Denver-based CAA Icon serves as a strategic advisor; and Houston-based Walter P. Moore designed the parking structure.

Hogan & Associates Construction broke ground recently on the new Highland High School campus, an expected $300 million project, marking one of the largest public-school investments in state history. The project is designed by NWL Architects. (photo Hogan & Associates Construction).

The Kathryn F. Kirk Center at Huntsman Cancer Institute on the University of Utah campus recently earned LEED Gold certification, a notable milestone for healthcare projects. (photo courtesy Architectural Nexus)

Hogan Breaks Ground on New $300 Million Highland High

On April 22, the Salt Lake City School District (SLCSD) officially broke ground on the re-imagined Highland High School campus, marking the beginning of one of the largest K-12 construction projects in Utah.

The approximately 493,238-SF campus is being constructed by Centerville-based Hogan & Associates Construction and designed by Salt Lake-based Naylor Wentworth Lund Architects. The multi-phase redevelopment is expected to be completed by December 2030.

The project represents a significant investment by SLCSD as it modernizes aging educational facilities across the district through its voter-approved bond program. Estimates for the Highland rebuild have generally been reported around $300 million ($255 million construction cost), making it among the most expensive public-school investments in the state.

District officials say the campus will support both modern learning environments and expanded student services. Plans call for 126 learning spaces in addition to a new media center, field house, health clinic, and expanded Career and Technical Education (CTE) facilities.

The new campus is also expected to feature upgraded technology infrastructure, collaborative learning environments, improved athletic amenities and enhanced sustainability systems intended to support long-term operational efficiency.

Originally opened in 1956, Highland High serves nearly 1,900 students and has long been one of Salt Lake City's most recognized neighborhood high schools. District officials have noted that the existing campus faces significant infrastructure challenges tied to aging plumbing, electrical and HVAC systems, along with limitations in supporting modern educational technology and programming.

HCI's Kathryn F. Kirk Center Earns LEED Gold Certification

The Kathryn F. Kirk Center for Comprehensive Cancer Care and Women's Cancers at Huntsman Cancer Institute has ›› achieved LEED Gold Certification under the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED for Healthcare rating system, marking a significant milestone in sustainable healthcare design.

"From the beginning, our vision was to create a healing environment that focuses on patient care while retaining a commitment to sustainability, resilience, and human-centered design. Achieving LEED Gold demonstrates how thoughtful healthcare architecture can support both patient well-being and environmental responsibility," said Lisa Whoolery, Senior Principal, Architectural Nexus.

As a 225,000-SF, eight-story expansion to Huntsman Cancer Hospital, the facility delivers advanced clinical care environments while setting a high standard for environmental performance and occupant well-being.

Achieving LEED Gold is a notable accomplishment for healthcare facilities. Hospitals and treatment centers are among the most energy-intensive building types due to strict ventilation requirements, 24/7 operations, and specialized medical equipment. As a result, higher levels of LEED certification, particularly Gold and above, remain relatively uncommon in this sector compared to commercial office or education buildings.

The building delivered early sustainability gold by emphasizing recycled-content materials, regional sourcing, and construction waste reduction—minimizing environmental impact while supporting local economies.

Patient and staff wellness were central to the design, with abundant natural light, high indoor air quality standards, and individual environmental controls that support comfort, recovery, and productivity.

The hospital expansion incorporates daylighting, high-performance glazing, optimized window-to-wall ratios, fixed shading systems, and heat recovery technologies to reduce energy consumption while enhancing interior comfort. Water-efficient plumbing fixtures and process water reuse strategies reduce overall consumption, supporting long-term conservation goals across the campus.

While the project has surpassed its original goal of LEED Silver certification, the design team maintained a broader vision throughout the process. LEED was used as a framework, not an endpoint, ensuring that sustainability decisions were guided by long-term performance, life-cycle value, and meaningful outcomes for patients and staff.

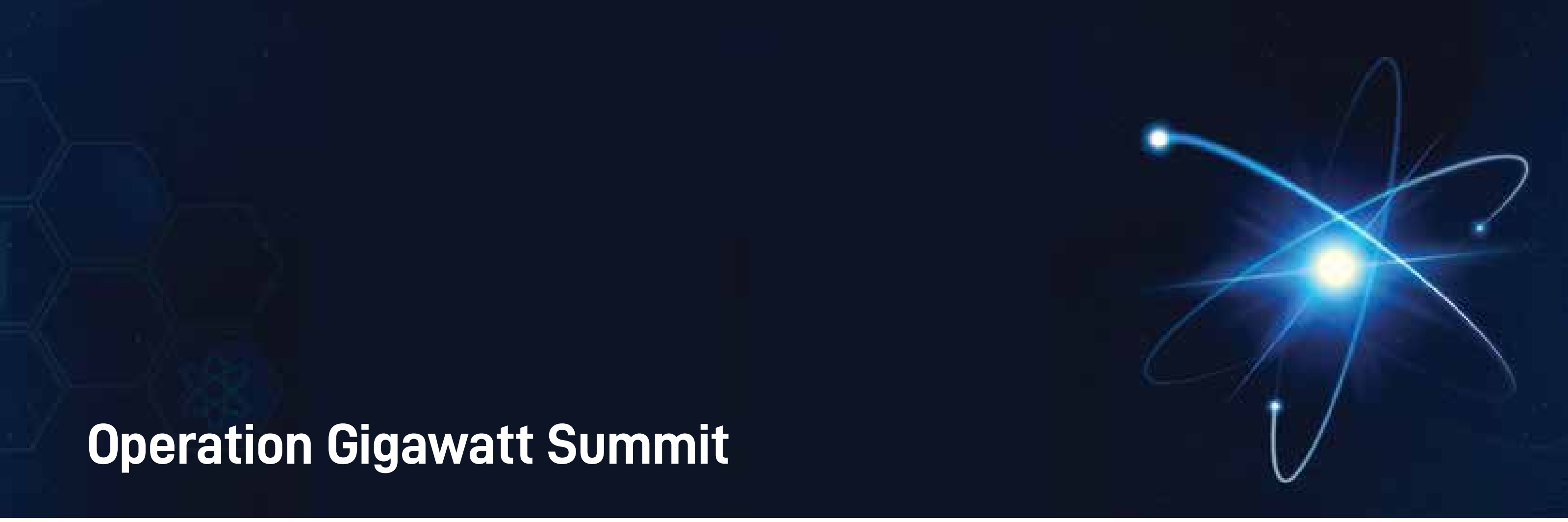
Jacobsen Breaks Ground on Herriman Life Time Country Club

Salt Lake City-based Jacobsen Construction joined city officials and project partners to break ground May 7 on a new Life Time Athletic Country Club in Herriman. The 103,000-SF, two-story facility, designed by Salt Lake-based VCBO Architecture, is slated for completion in fall 2027 and will become Life Time's second Utah location, joining the company's existing South Jordan club.

Designed as a high-end athletic and wellness destination, the facility will feature resort-style indoor and outdoor pools, four pickleball courts, extensive cardio and strength-training areas, yoga and Pilates studios, recovery amenities including saunas, steam rooms, hot tubs and cold plunges, as well as a full-service LifeSpa and LifeCafe.

The project also highlights the increasing prominence of luxury recreation and wellness facilities as an emerging commercial asset class in Utah. Similar developments nationwide have increasingly blurred the line between traditional fitness centers, resorts and lifestyle destinations, incorporating hospitality-driven design, social gathering spaces and recovery-focused amenities.››

Jacobsen Construction broke ground on May 7 on a new 103,000-SF Life Time Athletic Country Club in Herriman. (rendering courtesy Jacobsen Construction)



Operation Gigawatt Summit

Utah Governor Spencer Cox (left) discusses nuclear energy with the U.S. Secretary of Energy Chris Wright during the Operation Gigawatt Summit on May 22 at the Grand Hyatt in Park City. (photo by Bradley Fullmer)

Utah is Positioning Itself to be a Leader of the Rising Nuclear Energy Revolution in the U.S.

For decades, advocates of nuclear energy have promised a resurgence that never quite materialized. New technologies emerged, investment ebbed and flowed, and ambitious projections often stalled amid regulatory hurdles, political opposition, and economic uncertainty.

Today, many of the nation's top energy leaders believe the nation is ripe for a nuclear energy revolution, and Utah Governor Spencer Cox expects Utah to be the standard bearer.

At the Operation Gigawatt Summit May 22 at the Grant Hyatt in Park City, Governor Cox hosted Ho K. Nieh, Chairman of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), and Chris Wright, U.S. Secretary of Energy, to discuss what they see as a transformational moment for American energy production. Their message was clear: the United States is entering a new era of nuclear development, with Utah positioning itself at the forefront.

Energy Drives Prosperity

Wright framed the discussion in terms far broader than electricity generation.

"If you look at history, the progress of civilization and improvements in quality of life are intimately tied to energy," Wright said.

He pointed to the rise of the Netherlands as an economic power and the dramatic increase in global life expectancy over the last two centuries as examples of how energy access transforms societies.

"For most of human history, life expectancy at birth was about 30 years. Today it is approximately 70 years. What changed? The amount of available energy per person increased dramatically, alongside growth in human freedom and liberty."

According to Wright, abundant energy remains foundational for economic growth, innovation, and opportunity.

Moving Beyond Scarcity

Cox asked whether America is beginning to move away from what he described as a "scarcity mindset" that has dominated public discourse for decades.

"Are we now returning to a belief that our future can be bigger, more prosperous, and more optimistic?" Cox asked.

Wright believes the answer is yes.

"For decades, the dominant narrative was scarcity," he said. "We were told we were running out of resources, running out of energy, and running out of opportunities. There has never been a better time to be alive. The future can be extraordinary if we believe in it and work to make it so. We need a renewed culture of abundance, optimism, and entrepreneurial spirit."

Why Nuclear Matters

While renewable energy sources continue to expand, both federal officials emphasized that nuclear power occupies a unique role in meeting future energy demands.

"America urgently needs energy to support artificial intelligence, data centers and industrial growth," said Nieh, adding that it's also a matter of national security. "Over the last 30 years, China has brought nearly 60 reactors online. The United States has brought three. That's not just a statistic. It represents a strategic gap that America must close."

Countries around the world are making long-term decisions about energy infrastructure and reactor technology partners. If the United States cannot deliver, Nieh warned, other nations will turn elsewhere.

"Global leadership in nuclear energy matters economically, technologically, and geopolitically," he added.

> "America urgently needs energy to support artificial intelligence, data centers and industrial growth. Over the last 30 years, China has brought nearly 60 reactors online. The United States has brought three. That's not just a statistic. It represents a strategic gap that America must close."
>
> —Ho K. Nieh

The NRC's Transformation

One of the conference's central themes was the changing role of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Nieh returned to the NRC in January after spending time in the private sector and described the agency as undergoing its most significant shift in decades.

"I believe the ADVANCE Act and the executive order together represent the most consequential moment for the NRC in the last 50 years," he said. "One of the most important changes in the ADVANCE Act was making 'enabling' part of the NRC's mission."

The agency is now revising decades-old regulatory frameworks that were originally written for large conventional reactors. Those rules often contain unnecessary burdens that slow innovation without improving safety.

"We are removing unnecessary regulatory burdens while maintaining safety," Nieh said. "There is a new NRC. We will not be an impediment to the deployment of nuclear energy in the United States."

Speed and Safety Can Coexist

Cox highlighted one of the most common frustrations among developers and infrastructure builders: permitting delays. He referred to a major electricity transmission project that took 14 years to secure approvals as an example of a bogged down process. Both Wright and Nieh agreed that permitting reform is essential if America hopes to build the energy infrastructure needed to support future growth.

"Safety and speed are not mutually exclusive—in many ways, they are complementary," said Nieh, adding that NRC is working to eliminate procedural inefficiencies while maintaining rigorous technical review.

Wright echoed that sentiment.

"The original intent of environmental review laws was straightforward," he said. "Over time, the process became increasingly complex and vulnerable to delay and litigation."

Accelerating Advanced Reactors

The conversation included advanced nuclear technologies and the administration's aggressive deployment goals.

Last year, four executive orders aimed at accelerating nuclear development and modernizing the nation's nuclear infrastructure were signed, which Wright hailed as ambitious goals that inspire actions, including expanding America's nuclear generating capacity while bringing next-generation reactor technologies online far sooner than many experts once believed possible.

"If we remove unnecessary bureaucracy, apply thoughtful regulation, and let innovators do what they do best, these projects can happen," Wright said.

One of the most closely watched projects may be in Utah.

"I believe it is highly likely that we will have a next-generation, high-temperature, gas-cooled reactor operating its nuclear systems in Utah before July 4," Wright said.

Additional advanced reactor projects are also moving forward in Idaho, helping position the Intermountain West as a national center for nuclear innovation.

"When I speak with leaders around the world, they want to see American nuclear technology succeed again," Wright said. "These projects will demonstrate that America is back."

Utah's Opportunity

Utah is already taking steps to capitalize on that momentum with its participation in the Department of Energy's proposed Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campus initiative. More than two dozen states submitted proposals to host facilities supporting fuel fabrication, recycling, workforce development, and advanced reactor technologies.

Wright said Utah's proposal stood out, saying the state's submission was "outstanding".

The initiative reflects a broader vision for the future of nuclear energy—one that extends beyond electricity generation.

"Nearly half of all global energy consumption is used to make materials such as steel, cement, plastics, and fertilizer," Wright said. Those industries require enormous amounts of process heat, much of which currently comes from fossil fuels. He believes advanced reactors could ultimately play a key role in supplying that energy.

"The future nuclear economy will include fuel recycling, enrichment, fabrication and advanced materials processing," said Wright. "It will become one of the most important technology sectors of the next generation."

The Need for New Nuclear Energy Projects

To realize this future, the U.S. must regain its ability to build nuclear-related construction projects, which Wright said means restoring domestic manufacturing, strengthening energy production, and creating opportunities across all sectors of the workforce. Nieh said that it's essential to create regulatory systems that support innovation and preserve public trust.

> "The future nuclear economy will include fuel recycling, enrichment, fabrication and advanced materials processing. It will become one of the most important technology sectors of the next generation."
>
> —Chris Wright

The convergence of federal support, private investment, advanced reactor designs, and rapidly growing electricity demand has created conditions many believe are unlike anything seen in the nuclear industry for decades. Whether this momentum ultimately fulfills the promise of a true nuclear renaissance remains to be seen. But for the first time in a generation, leaders at every level—from state government to the Department of Energy to the NRC—appear aligned around a common objective: restoring America's leadership in nuclear energy.

"To reestablish American leadership in nuclear energy, we need capacity, deployment, and credibility," said Nieh. ■

Former Whitaker Construction President Rick Whitaker Passes Away at 74

Minardi assumes new role at UAPA; Moore named NAIOP President; Warnick establishes A/E/C consulting firm; ReMine earns SMPS Fellow status; SJP promotes Gifford, Clark; DeMann joins Meridian; RLW hires Nelsen; Engage adds Gillman to staff; ASCE Utah honors individuals.

Long-time **Whitaker Construction** executive **Richard Kent (Rick) Whitaker** passed away peacefully at his home in Brigham City on April 18, 2026, just four days after celebrating his 74th birthday.

He was a competitive athlete in high school, lettering in football and wrestling at the state level before graduating from Box Elder High in 1970. He attended Utah State University, earning a Bachelor of Human Resource Management and Economics in 1975.

Whitaker was a key member of Brigham City-based Whitaker Construction for more than 50 years. He devoted his life to the family business, a company his father, Jim, started from the ground up in 1953. Whitaker carried that legacy forward with pride and determination, further sharpening his leadership through the Owner/President Management Program at Harvard Business School, serving as the heavy-civil firm's third-ever President from 2003 until 2015 before serving as the Chairman of the Board in his last years at the company.

Whitaker was in industry legend for work outside of the family business, too, serving the AGC of Utah as Secretary/Treasurer from 2000-2002, contributing greatly to the Beehive State's construction industry.

Whitaker's life extended well beyond his work. He was an active member of Kiwanis and the Golden Spike Trap Club, where he also served as President. He embraced the outdoors with intensity and skill—trap shooting, duck hunting, fishing, golfing, "glamping", snowmobiling, and riding his Harley-Davidson and side-by-side. His efforts earned him numerous awards, trophies, belt buckles, firearms, and recognition across the Intermountain West.

Whitaker was preceded in death by his parents, Nedra and James (Jim), and his brothers Robert and Dennis. He is survived by his devoted wife of 19 years, Lynelle Ruth Whitaker; his two children from his first marriage, Dustin and Resha; and his sister, Tami.

"Rick lived his life on his terms, he didn't apologize for who he was and expected the same genuineness from those around him," said Brett Nielsen, President of Whitaker Construction. "When our company was faced with several challenges in the late 80's/early 90's that could have easily destroyed our company, Rick had the backbone to make the tough calls and roll up his sleeves to ensure that our company not only survived but was positioned to thrive. Rick shared that same strong passion with the industry while serving as AGC of Utah's Secretary/Treasurer from 2000 to 2002. When Rick and his brothers Bob and Dennis made the decision to move their company towards a 100% ESOP company, he understood that the future of Whitaker Construction belonged with our people. We're grateful for his impact."

Bup Minardi has taken a role as Director of Industry Relations at the **Utah Asphalt Pavement Association** (UAPA). Minardi has served UAPA for many years, including Secretary, Board member, and President.

"This industry is made up of private sector and government entities to ensure the safety, quality, and sustainability in every aspect of asphalt use," said Minardi. "Regardless if it is a road, runway, parking lot, or alternative pathway for biking and walking, our mission is to produce, place, and preserve the very best quality product. The collaboration of industry and policy makers results in a significant infrastructure that ensures Utahns can travel, park, and stroll safely to their destinations for years to come."

Minardi is the past Owner/President of MRES Imports LLC, a company with locations in Salt Lake City and Mesa, Arizona, which specializes in automated lubrication systems for heavy equipment. Minardi led that company for more than 21 years before selling it in 2025. He also founded Insieme, LLC, a company focused on real estate development, general contracting, and property management.

Braden Moore, Vice President and Project Executive at Salt Lake-based **Big-D Construction**, was named President of NAIOP Utah, effective June 2026. In this role, Moore will lead the NAIOP Utah Board of Directors and work to advance the association's mission of promoting responsible commercial real estate development across the state.

"Serving as President of the NAIOP Utah Chapter is an incredible honor," said Moore. "Utah's commercial real estate market is one of the most dynamic in the country, and I believe NAIOP has a critical role to play in shaping the legislative and community landscape that allows our industry to thrive. I look forward to working alongside our members and partners to advocate for smart policy and give back to the communities where we live and build."

Moore brings more than 20 years of construction industry experience to the role, having begun his career in the field as a laborer and carpenter apprentice, a foundation that has shaped his deep respect for the craft and for the people who bring projects to life. He rose through the ranks at Big-D Construction, serving as National Project Development Director before being promoted to Vice President of the firm's Salt Lake City Group in 2023, where he oversees client relationships, project execution, business operations, and strategic growth in the Utah market. Moore has been an active member of the NAIOP Utah Board of Directors, where he has been a consistent voice for the industry.

Julie Warnick has established her own firm, Orem-based **Julie Warnick Consulting**, where she serves clients as a Brand Strategist and Fractional CMO.


Bup Minardi


Braden Moore


Julie Warnick


Cynthia ReMine


Scott Gifford


Andrew Clark


Mary DeMann


Melanie Nelsen

Known for her ability to connect strategy with real-world execution, Warnick has more than 25 years of experience in marketing, communications, and event production, including eight years leading the in-house marketing and communications team at Orem-based Clyde Companies, where she helped transform marketing from a tactical function into a strategic driver of growth across multiple construction-related businesses.

In her current role, she partners with small to mid-sized companies—many in the construction and design industry—to help align their brand, culture, and customer experience. Her work focuses on clarifying a company's mission, vision, and values, then translating that foundation into more effective marketing, stronger internal alignment, and improved employee attraction and retention.

Cynthia ReMine, FSMPS, CPSM, a Principal at Salt Lake-based **Reaveley Engineers**, has been named a Fellow of the Society for Marketing Professional Services (SMPS), one of the highest honors awarded within the A/E/C industry.

The SMPS College of Fellows recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions to the profession through leadership, mentorship, education, and the advancement of marketing and business development within the industry.

For nearly three decades, ReMine has focused on helping elevate marketing and business development as strategic leadership disciplines within A/E/C firms. Her work has centered on making marketing more visible, measurable, and integrated into firm leadership, planning, and long-term growth strategies.

At Reaveley Engineers, she helped develop systems and processes that more directly connected marketing and business development to leadership decision-making, team development, and firm growth. Her work has also emphasized mentorship, leadership development, and creating environments that encourage professionals to invest in themselves, contribute meaningfully to teams, and grow throughout their careers.

"Cynthia's leadership has made our firm more focused, more consistent, and better prepared for the future," said Mark Harris, Chairman of the Board and Chief Revenue Officer at Reaveley.

St. John Properties has promoted **Scott Gifford** and **Andrew Clark** in the commercial real estate firm's Utah Regional Office.

Gifford is now the Vice President, Leasing, having served as Assistant Vice President of Leasing. He has more than 20 years of diversified business and real estate experience and has worked with St. John Properties since 2019.››

Among other continued duties, Gifford will direct all leasing efforts of St. John Properties' 1.4 million-SF Utah portfolio. He will lead efforts identifying companies and organizations seeking new or expanded commercial office, flex/R&D, and retail space in the firm's four business communities situated in Pleasant Grove (Valley Grove; the firm's Utah HQ), Marriott-Slaterville (12th Street Exchange), Taylorsville (Beltway West), and Saratoga Springs (Spring Heights). .

Clark was promoted to Director of Interior Construction. He joined the company in 2023 as a Project Manager and brings 10 years of construction management experience to his new position.

In this role, Clark will supervise the completion of tenant build-out projects across St. John Properties' portfolio of business communities throughout Salt Lake, Weber, and Utah counties. His responsibilities include managing all on-site interior construction projects, serving as the primary liaison between third-party contractors and tenants during the design and build-out process, and ensuring that all spaces are delivered on-time and within budget.

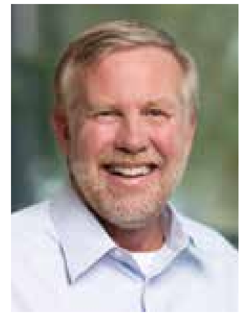
Mary DeMann has joined South Jordan-based **Meridian Engineering** as Business Development and Marketing Manager, where she leads the firm's marketing and business development team. Previously, she served as Director of Marketing for Education at Salt Lake-based Resolut, where she led marketing strategy and pursuits supporting K–12 projects throughout the region.

DeMann is passionate about the K–12 and healthcare sectors and brings an energetic, relationship-driven approach to marketing in the A/E/C industry. She is particularly interested in strategic planning, team engagement, and collaboration, and looks forward to supporting Meridian's continued growth while helping project teams deliver impactful infrastructure for the communities they serve.

Melanie Nelsen, CPSM, recently joined Draper-based **Ralph L. Wadsworth Construction** as Director of Marketing and Business Development. Nelsen has 25 years of experience in marketing for architecture, engineering, and construction firms, most recently in Pleasant Grove-based Horrocks's pursuits of progressive design-build and other projects.


Jordon Gillman


Dr. Clifton Farnsworth


Greg Thomas


Emily Tulsky

Her expertise encompasses crafting compelling proposals, driving business development initiatives and strategy, coaching for interview presentations, and effectively managing a team. She was honored as the 2025 Marketer of the Year by the SMPS Utah Chapter, recognizing her outstanding contributions to the field. Throughout her career, she has demonstrated a strong ability to build relationships with clients and stakeholders, ensuring successful project outcomes.

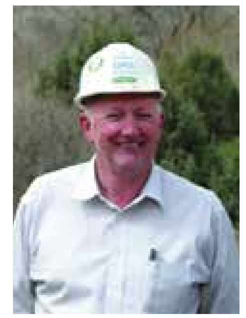
Jordon Gillman was recently hired by Salt Lake City-based **Engage Contracting** as a Business Development Director, where he will continue building a career centered around leadership, innovation, and strong relationships.

Gillman has more than 20 years of experience spanning business development, operations, and team collaboration. He values hard work, integrity, and creating opportunities for teams and clients to succeed together and looks forward to contributing to Engage's culture and helping support the company's continued growth and impact.

The **Utah Chapter of the American Society of Civil Engineers** recently honored individuals as part of its 2026 awards event.

Dr. Clifton Farnsworth, ENV SP, of **Brigham Young University** was named "Educator of the Year" for inspiring students by cultivating leadership, expanding competition involvement, and strengthening industry engagement. He has taught at BYU for more than 15 years and


Ethlyn Ann Hansen


H. Lee Wimmer

prepared 13 distinct courses of instruction.

Greg Thomas, PE, was named "Engineer of the Year" for his leadership, technical excellence, and commitment to advancing Utah's infrastructure. Thomas serves as Principal at South Jordan-based **Hansen, Allen & Luce Engineers**.

Emily Tulsky, PE, a Stormwater Consultant at Salt Lake-based **Contech Engineered Solutions**, was named "Fresh Face of the Year" for working to improve water quality standards and find solutions to groundwater recharge. She served this past year as Event Coordinator for ASCE Utah's Younger Member Forum.

ASCE also honored **Ethlyn Ann Hansen** and **H. Lee Wimmer** with "Landmark Engineer" awards. Hansen was the first woman to graduate from the University of Utah's Civil Engineering program in 1951 and spent her career designing transportation projects primarily in California. Wimmer worked in California during his early career before returning to Utah in 1973 to work for Horrocks, serving as a Principal for over two decades. He transitioned in 1994 to work for **Central Utah Water Conservancy District**, serving as Assistant General Manager and Program/Construction Manager where he helped oversee the Central Utah Project, one of the largest water resources initiatives in state history. ■

Reliability Is a Design Requirement: A Practical "All-of-the-Above" Energy Strategy for Utah

By Joseph Hulse

Utah's construction and development community is no stranger to growth. Across the state, projects are getting larger, more complex, and more dependent on reliable, always-on energy. But what's changed in the past few years is the pace. Demand for power is increasing faster than the systems designed to deliver it.

For owners, architects, contractors, and developers, power availability has become a gating factor that can delay a project, reshape a design, or determine whether a development moves forward at all.

That's why reliability isn't just an operational concern anymore. It's a design requirement.

Utah Is at the Center of a Regional Shift

The West is entering a period of rapid energy demand growth, and Utah is right in the middle of it.

New large-scale customers, from advanced manufacturing to data centers, are driving demand at a scale and speed that traditional planning cycles weren't built to accommodate. What used to take years to materialize is now happening in months.

We're seeing that firsthand. Williams is actively developing new capacity in Utah, including projects capable of delivering significant new power in compressed timelines that are measured in months, not years.

At the same time, demand itself is changing. It's more variable, less predictable, and increasingly tied to technologies that require constant, high-intensity load.

The combination of faster growth and more dynamic demand is redefining what reliability looks like in practice.

Reliability Comes from Diversity—Not a Single Resource

There's a tendency to look for a single answer in today's energy transition. In reality, the most reliable systems are built on a mix.

Across Utah and the broader West, the path forward is an "all-of-the-above" approach where renewables, natural gas, transmission, and storage all play complementary roles.

Natural gas provides something essential: dispatchable generation that can respond when renewable output drops or when demand spikes. At the same time, renewables will continue to grow and are a critical part of the long-term mix.

Storage is increasingly important as well. Williams is already deploying large-scale battery energy storage systems, including Tesla Megapacks, to respond to changing load conditions in milliseconds, and help stabilize the grid in real time.

Beyond batteries, existing natural gas storage assets provide another layer of flexibility—balancing supply and demand on an hourly basis and acting as a critical reliability buffer as load profiles shift.

The result is a system that works not because of any one resource, but because each part reinforces the others.

Building on Existing Infrastructure Is Utah's Advantage

One of the most practical paths to reliability is also the fastest: start with what already exists.

Utah benefits from an established network of pipelines, storage assets, and energy corridors that can be expanded and optimized to meet new demand. In many cases, it is significantly faster and more cost-effective to grow those systems than to build new infrastructure from the ground up.

That's the strategy we're pursuing at Williams. Instead of starting from scratch, we're asking how existing systems can do more, whether that's adding compression, expanding capacity, or integrating new storage capabilities.

A clear example serving Utah and the broader region is the Naughton coal-to-gas conversion project in Wyoming. Projects like this leverage existing infrastructure and interconnections to deliver reliable power faster than greenfield development while also supporting emissions reductions and system flexibility.

For developers and contractors, the takeaway is straightforward: projects that align with existing infrastructure are often the ones that move fastest, with fewer permitting hurdles and greater certainty of delivery.

Policy and Process Are Part of the Solution

Infrastructure alone isn't enough; process matters.

One of the biggest challenges in meeting demand today is not resource availability, but the time it takes to approve and build projects. That's where Utah has taken a pragmatic approach.

Recent policy changes, including SB132, are helping create clearer pathways for serving large new energy loads, particularly as demand from data centers and industrial users accelerates.

From our perspective, that kind of framework matters. It allows utilities, infrastructure providers, and customers to move in parallel rather than sequentially. The result: aligning earlier, reducing uncertainty, and, ultimately, delivering projects faster.

States that embrace this kind of practical coordination are the ones attracting investment and keeping projects on track.

Natural gas storage in the Clay Basin area of northeastern Utah (opposite) and transmission infrastructure (pictured) help connect Utah to the energy that powers the state. (Photos courtesy Williams)

Speed Is Now a Competitive Advantage

Speed has become one of the defining challenges in energy infrastructure.

We're seeing large loads emerge in six months to a year. These are timelines that traditional utility planning was never designed to match. At the same time, requests for power are often duplicated across multiple sites and states, creating a level of uncertainty around where and when demand will materialize.

That's why the focus has shifted toward readiness and having infrastructure solutions that can move quickly when real demand shows up.

At Williams, that means developing projects with line-of-sight supply, leveraging existing systems, and keeping capacity "on the shelf" so it can be deployed when needed.

For the construction community, that reinforces the importance of early alignment—understanding what power is actually available, what infrastructure can be delivered on time, and how project timelines need to reflect that reality. ››

Designing for Energy Is Now Part of the Job

For Utah's construction and design community, the implications are clear.

Energy planning needs to start earlier. Site selection, design, and development timelines all need to account for infrastructure availability from day one.

Projects also need to be designed for flexibility. As demand profiles shift, systems that can scale or adapt will have a clear advantage.

And most importantly, it requires partnership. The most successful projects today are the ones that bring together developers, utilities, infrastructure providers, and regulators early to align on what's needed and what can be achieved.

A Practical Path Forward

Utah has the right ingredients to meet this moment: a strong infrastructure base, a growing economy, and a pragmatic approach to energy development.

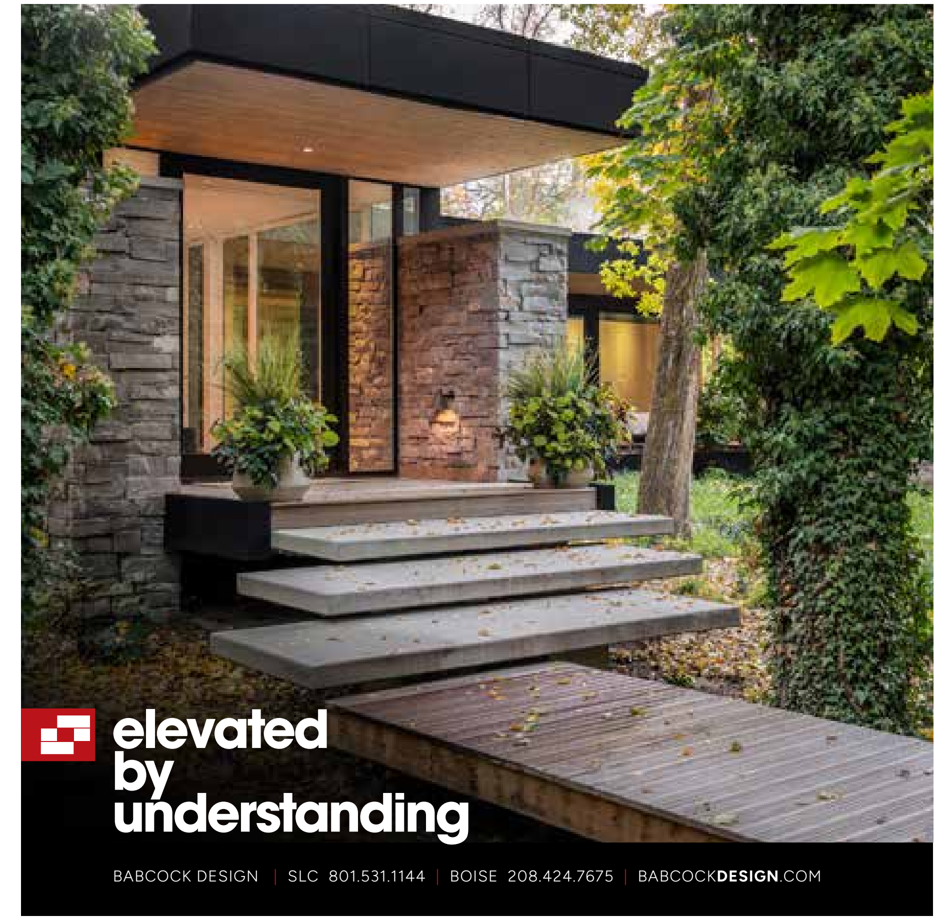
The path forward is equally practical.

- Leverage what already exists;
- Deploy solutions that can be built today;
- And design around a balanced energy mix that prioritizes reliability alongside affordability and long-term sustainability.

For the construction and design community, the message is simple: energy is no longer a background input but a core part of how projects get built.

Reliability isn't something you add at the end, it's something you design for from the start. ■

Joseph Hulse is Vice President of Commercial, Western Interstates at Williams where he helps deliver energy infrastructure solutions across the West. Based in Salt Lake City, Hulse focuses on connecting growing communities and major new customers with reliable, affordable energy by expanding and optimizing existing infrastructure and integrating storage where it strengthens grid resilience.



Is Utah Ready for Progressive Design-Build in the Vertical Market?

Seattle-based firms tout the benefits of PDB at a recent industry summit, which drew owners and A/E/C professionals who desire a better delivery method.

By Bradley Fullmer

Landon Sherwood (left), Layton Construction's Director of Business Development, was the emcee for a 2026 Progressive Design-Build Summit in April at Hale Center Theater in Sandy. Matt Boyer (right), Deputy Director of Utah's DFCM, was one of the speakers.

The completion of the $526 million US-89 Farmington I-84 highway corridor in early 2024 marked the first official progressive design-build (PDB) project in Utah, spurred by the Utah Department of Transportation's willingness to push the project delivery envelope on a more collaborative design and construction process.

Regarding the vertical building market in the Beehive State, much work needs to done educating owners and A/E/C team members before PDB is fully utilized. At a PDB Summit April 14 at Hale Center Theatre in Sandy hosted by Sandy-based Layton Construction, executives from a trio of Seattle-based firms spoke to local industry professionals and said the delivery model tends to function best when owners stay engaged, project teams collaborate early, and trust in each other outweighs the need for parties to protect their own self-interests.

In a commercial building environment where construction teams are being asked to deliver more certainty and less risk, PDB is gaining momentum as a model built for complexity, speed, and shared problem-solving.

All featured speakers came from Seattle, including Troy Stedman, President and CEO of Seattle-based Abbott Construction; Mica Klein, a Partner in the national construction practice at Seattle-based law firm Perkins Coie; and Todd Stine, a Partner with Seattle-based ZGF Architects. Even coming from the contractor, legal, and design sides of the table, each arrived at a strikingly consistent conclusion: progressive design-build works best when the right people are involved early, when owners understand their role, and when the process is allowed to be genuinely collaborative.

A Contractor's Framing

For Stedman, the case for PDB is no longer theoretical. Abbott Construction, which operates along the West Coast, now performs a substantial portion of its work under the model—roughly one-third of the company's Washington volume, and half of 2025 overall revenue, is typically delivered via PDB.

What the firm has learned, Stedman said, is that success in PDB has less to do with project type than with process discipline and team composition.

"Clients are often on a journey toward a better way to build, and they need a team that knows how to guide that process," said Stedman.

That is why Abbott Construction created an alternative delivery group focused specifically on these kinds of projects—a dedicated team across the construction scope who regularly work together and understand the unique demands of collaborative delivery.

> "Clients are often on a journey toward a better way to build, and they need a team that knows how to guide that process."
> — **Troy Stedman**

His most memorable example was a hospital expansion in Port Townsend, Washington, for non-profit public agency Jefferson Healthcare. The project started with friction as the hospital's CEO, shaped by a poor prior experience under a traditional design-bid-build model, entered the PDB process with deep skepticism. Decision-making was tightly centralized, workshop conversations were stilted, and the collaboration was not really happening.

Stedman said the turning point came when he met privately with the CEO and urged him to loosen his grip on the process, where senior leaders could be more guardrail than gatekeeper, empowering the working team to solve problems openly and honestly. Once that shift happened, the project team took off, finishing the job successfully on time and under budget.

By the ribbon-cutting, the same CEO had turned from skeptic to enthusiastically praising PDB as the right way to deliver public work.

For Stedman, that experience crystallized one of the model's biggest truths: PDB is more than a contract structure, but a behavioral structure with an involved owner and high-trust team willing to quickly address and dispose of toxic dynamics.

Tools like project charters, risk registers, choosing-by-advantages decision-making, and a clear governance structure that separates the various scopes ranging form micro to macro. Done right, he said, those structures do more than solve problems; they create culture.

The Legal Perspective

As a lawyer who often represents owners, Klein joked that being invited to speak at a contractor-hosted event was itself evidence that the PDB model is working. In a delivery method often described as collaborative, she argued that the contract must be built to support collaboration instead of undermining it.

What makes PDB unique, she said, is that parties agree to a contract before they have fully agreed on the ultimate business terms—cost, schedule, scope, and timing are intentionally deferred while the team develops the project together. That multi-phase structure gives owners flexibility, but it also demands clarity about process, roles, and risk allocation.

Klein pointed to projects where that flexibility has proved especially valuable, including a hospital development in Idaho involving roughly 10 different legal owners with overlapping interests and scopes. In that setting, PDB allowed the broader team to begin conceptual work for the campus while preserving the ability for different parties to define and contract for their individual pieces over time.

While PDB allows for flexibility and an involving contract, discipline is still required. Klein stressed the importance of risk planning from the outset and using the contract to reflect the realities of an evolving design process. PDB, she suggested, offers one of the industry's best opportunities to align legal structure with actual project behavior.

Architectural Viewpoint

Stine added another layer to the discussion. ZGF, a 600-plus-employee firm with seven offices, has completed more than 143 design-build projects, including notable work in Utah for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—the LDS Conference Center and City Creek Mall in downtown Salt Lake and projects at the Missionary Training Center in Provo.

He traced ZGF's design-build journey from high-risk federal pursuits after the Great Recession to more recent PDB work with public institutions in Washington. Across that spectrum, one lesson stands out: owners need a strong "North Star".

Teams perform best, said Stine, when the owner has done substantial internal work defining values, decision-making structures, and risk tolerance before the job gains momentum. An owners looking to incorporate PDB, he said, must understand how their organization makes decisions, who has authority, how flexible the culture is, and whether the owner is prepared to stay actively engaged as PDB is not a turnkey excuse for owners to step away. If anything, it requires more timely input, more transparency, and more availability from the owner side.

From the designer side, Stine said PDB's biggest advantage is early collaboration with contractors and trade partners. PDB creates more opportunity to test ideas, resolve scope questions, and tap subcontractor expertise early on while the design is still forming. That process can lead to better execution, better value and fewer downstream surprises.

But as with any project or delivery method, it comes down to trust and expertise. "If you have the wrong people sitting at the table," Stine said, "it's going to be a challenging project, regardless of the delivery method. You need that willingness to engage in the project and be honest with each other about what works or doesn't work and why, and not be protective of your [individual] risk."

PDB's Future in Utah

The message from Utah's first Progressive Design-Build Summit was clear: progressive design-build is not a silver bullet that will suddenly vanquish the industry's many challenges, but it is a powerful framework when used as intended.

Matt Boyer, Deputy Director for the State of Utah's Division of Facilities Construction and Management (DFCM), also spoke about where the DFCM is with considering PDB on its future projects. Boyer said PDB "is a realistic delivery method for DFCM if the right stakeholder group and project can be identified" and that DFCM's leadership team is "cautiously optimistic that this could be a great delivery method from which projects could benefit."

While the methodology seems to offer valuable benefits for a project while bridging the gaps between design-build and CM/GC, Boyer said, "Having not gone through a progressive design-build project yet, some questions remain regarding value brought and costs incurred on the project."

Boyer said one current PDB solicitation is underway for Dixie Technical College's Trades and Technology Building in St. George. Once DFCM gains some experience with the PDB approach, he continued, "We may explore additional opportunities to utilize it on other projects."

Landon Sherwood, Director of Business Development for Layton, said the event was a "huge success" and "eye opening" for the over 100 industry professionals in attendance, one that will help PDB to become more prominent in the near future.

"I believe the future for PDB looks bright in Utah," said Sherwood. "The opportunity for collaboration and innovation is second to none in PDB." ■

Powerhouse MEPT Merger

The creation of Lynk Engineers combines the diverse skill sets of three prominent Salt Lake-based engineering companies—Spectrum, Colvin, and Envision—into one dynamic firm.

By Bradley Fullmer

Executive leaders at Salt Lake-based Lynk Engineers include (L-R): Chris Kobayashi, Dave Wesemann, Scott Hardy, Jeff Owen, Aleksandar Rankovic, Steve Connor, and Jarrett Capstick. (image courtesy Lynk Engineers)

The latest merger among prominent Salt Lake-based A/E/C firms is indeed a powerhouse venture, with Spectrum Engineers, Colvin Engineering, and Envision Engineering combining its formidable forces together to create MEPT-dynamo Lynk Engineers—culminating a deal that finalized March 31 after more than a year of complex negotiations.

With well over a century of combined experience—114 years to be exact—and nearly 250 total employees, Lynk professionals specialize in mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and technology building systems, bringing a wealth of specialized engineering to owners in the commercial design and construction realm. The three firms have also long been recognized for their respective industry leadership and award-winning work and have designed numerous LEED, WELL Building, and ENERGY STAR facilities.

> "Mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and technology systems are deeply interconnected in modern building design. By bringing the brightest and best MEPT talent together, we further elevate service to our clients and produce smarter, faster, more sustainable outcomes."
> **— Dave Wesemann**

The newly appointed seven-person executive team at Lynk Engineers includes leaders from each of the three legacy firms:

- Chris Kobayashi, CEO (formerly President, Spectrum Engineers)
- Scott Hardy, President (formerly CFO, Envision Engineering)
- Jarrett Capstick, COO—Mechanical Engineering (formerly Principal, Colvin Engineering)
- Aleksandar Rankovic, COO—Electrical Engineering (formerly Principal, Envision Engineering)

Serving as Executive Advisors are:

- Dave Wesemann (formerly CEO, Spectrum Engineers)
- Steve Connor (formerly President, Colvin Engineering)
- Jeff Owen (formerly Founder and CEO, Envision Engineering)

"This merger is a significant step forward—for our teams, our clients, and the communities we serve," said Kobayashi. "By uniting our legacy firms, we're creating a stronger, more connected MEPT practice with the scale, talent, and technology to deliver smarter, more resilient solutions."

"All three companies have worked extensively together over the past 30-plus years [and] have had a similar client base, and by virtue of client selection, we have been teamed up together on many projects," said Owen, citing major building and infrastructure projects like the $5.1 billion Salt Lake City Airport Redevelopment, the $85 million University of Utah Electrical Infrastructure Upgrade, and the $1.05 billion Utah State Correctional Facility as examples of past collaboration efforts. "Those past relationships were incredibly significant in building trust. We realized early in the merger process that, although we could have a written agreement in place that the merger would be based on, we still needed trust to move the company forward in a positive, successful direction after the merger. Through the projects we've worked on together, that trust was built. and so when merger discussion began, we already had a solid basis from which to build."

"The electrical engineers on the vast majority of our projects were Spectrum or Envision," said Connor. "I grew up in the industry with Dave and Jeff, and our firms have collaborated for years, so combining our talents was a remarkably easy decision."

"Simply put, the merger makes sense," added Wesemann. "Mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and technology systems are deeply interconnected in modern building design. By bringing the brightest and best MEPT talent together, we further elevate service to our clients and produce smarter, faster, more sustainable outcomes. We're excited to bring top talent in Utah together."

Teaming Up Trending in the Beehive State

It's no secret that significant mergers and acquisitions are becoming more prominent within Utah's A/E/C community, as firms seek to expand their respective capabilities in the interest of competing for, and landing, the biggest and most challenging projects, not just within the state, but regionally.

Combining three top-shelf firms like Spectrum, Colvin, and Envision into one entity and uniting their vast, complimentary expertise and shared values allows the firm to immediately strengthen overall MEPT skill sets, creating a more integrated, technologically advanced platform to deliver services and reinforce long-term relationships while advancing growth.

> "It's no secret that Utah has a hot market and national firms want a piece of it. To remain competitive on larger projects, we felt that it was essential to create one strong combined MEPT firm."
> **— Jeff Owen**

"We've seen this as a national trend for many years and have worked on building this into the Utah market for the past two decades," said Wesemann. "In other states, it's commonplace for clients to hire one firm to do all MEP."

"For years, Utah has been an outlier when it came to large, integrated MEP firms—we've kept the mechanical and electrical largely separate," said Connor. "Nationally, the default is MEP, and there's a lot of good reasons to combine the disciplines in one firm, since our systems interact with each other so much."

The merger also helps fend off competition from large, prominent national firms who are increasingly eyeing Utah as a fruitful design and construction market.

"It's no secret that Utah has a hot market and national MEPT firms want a piece of it," added Owen. "To remain competitive on larger projects, we felt that it was essential to create one strong combined MEPT firm."

He emphasized the belief among executives that consultant selection for certain project types is based more on relationships than a requirement to have all MEPT services under one roof.

"For example, consultant selections in the K-12 market are based more so on local relationships with disciplines being selected from various groups," Owen said. "We ultimately respect our clients' choice when it comes to who they want to choose for MEPT services, whether that be in one multidisciplinary firm or consultants being selected across multiple engineering firms. We're not here to push it one way or another, but to provide solid options for our clients."

Lynk leaders added that although there are just a few firms in Utah that offer both architectural and engineering services, they don't intend to add the "A" to their robust "E" offerings.

"Branch offices are already being established by national A/E design firms here in Utah, and we believe that trend will continue," said Owen. "Unless Utah-based architectural and engineering design firms have unique niche market services to offer nationally or internationally as one combined source, they will, for the most part, remain separate sources in our opinion."

"Certainly, the largest national firms are A/E, but it remains to be seen if that model works in our market," said Connor.

"We haven't seen a lot of architect/engineer firms in Utah, although there are some nationally," Wesemann added. "Our plan is to stay with engineering only and continue to support all of our architect clients." ■

ABC UTAH HOSTS NATIONAL CONVENTION &

Announces 2026 EIC Awards

SALT LAKE CITY

Current Chair Craig Madsen Optimistic About Utah's Construction Future

By Bradley Fullmer

It's been an eventful year for the Utah Chapter of the Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC Utah), which hosted ABC's 2026 National Convention on March 18-20 in Salt Lake City, the first time Utah's local chapter has hosted the prestigious event.

"I think what struck me is how many great contractors there are nationwide," said Craig Madsen, President/CEO of Lehi-based J&M Steel Solutions and 2026 ABC Utah Chairman, adding that it was a great honor for the Utah chapter to put their best foot forward, while being able to associate with top executives and leaders from ABC National.

ABC National announced the winners of its 37th annual National Craft Championships and its 2026 Construction Management Competition. Honorees were celebrated on the last day of the convention.

Established in 1987, ABC's National Craft Championships annually highlight the achievements of individuals who represent the future of the construction industry. The competition showcased the skills of more than 200 of the nation's best craft professionals. Competitors vied for top honors in 15 competitions with skills on display in 11 crafts, including carpentry, drywall, electrical, HVAC, plumbing, and welding,

ABC's annual Construction Management Competition gives the nation's top construction management students a glimpse into the real world of construction as well as an opportunity to showcase their talents and provide them valuable, resume-building experience. This year, 30 teams of undergraduate students from a nationwide array of colleges and universities with leading construction management programs put their project management skills to the test by completing the same real-life construction project.

Louisiana State University, affiliated with the ABC Pelican chapter, was named overall winner with the highest cumulative points in the five competition categories.

Madsen Optimistic, Excited About Future of Construction in Utah

From founding J&M Steel Solutions in 2004 to stepping into the role of 2026 Chairman of the ABC of Utah, Madsen has built a career—and a company—defined by hands-on craftsmanship, steady growth, and a willingness to engage where it matters most: at the jobsite and in the halls of government.

Craig Madsen, 2026 ABC Utah Chairman.
(photos courtesy ABC Utah, ABC Utah member firms)

From Murray Roots to Industry Leadership

A native of Murray, Madsen's introduction to construction came early. At just 16, he began building houses with a neighbor—an experience that stuck.

"I've always loved working with my hands, taking things apart and seeing how they work," he said.

After graduating from Murray High School, Madsen enrolled at Brigham Young University with plans to pursue mechanical engineering. But after his first year, he pivoted—ultimately earning a Bachelor of Construction Management in 1995. The shift proved formative, aligning his natural inclinations with a career path that would later define him.

Nearly a decade later, in April 2004, Madsen founded J&M Steel Solutions. Today, the company is recognized as a consistent, high-performing player in Utah's structural steel market.

A Reputation Built on Performance

In an industry where reliability is currency, Madsen emphasizes execution.

"One of the good things about our company is we have a good reputation," he said. "Our EMR is .52—that is crazy for a steel company. Our guys do a good job. We hit schedules even when things are tight."

That reputation has translated into repeat work across multiple sectors, including industrial, aviation, mining, higher education, and healthcare.

Recent and ongoing projects highlight the firm's capabilities:

- Structural steel work on a new five-story building in Ogden for America First Credit Union, part of its expanding headquarters campus;
- Collaboration with JT Steel on a highly specialized canopy structure at Utah Olympic Park—a 6,000-foot cantilevered enclosure over the bobsled and luge track;
- Participation in the proposed 500,000-SF rebuild of West High School, which is expected to become the largest high school in Utah.

"These are the kinds of projects where performance matters," Madsen said. "We get jobs because general contractors know we'll deliver."

Advocacy Through ABC

Madsen's involvement with ABC was not accidental—it was driven by frustration.

"I got involved mostly because of government affairs," he said. "I was tired of seeing bills get passed for union-only work or project labor agreements."

That frustration turned into action. As the 2026 Chairman, Madsen is focused on strengthening contractor voices at the state level.

"The government passes legislation that affects our business, and we don't know about it until it becomes law," he said. "That prompted me to get involved."

Among his concerns:

- Legislation that reduces licensing requirements;
- Changes to bonding requirements on public projects;
- Ongoing "pet projects" that can reshape the industry landscape;

To bridge the gap, Madsen advocates bringing policymakers directly to the field.

"We want to invite legislators throughout the year to a job site and see some of the struggles we deal with," he said.

Workforce: The Industry's Defining Challenge

If policy is one front, workforce development is another—and perhaps the more urgent.

"Making sure kids coming out of high school—who are not bound for college—know about the trades is critical," Madsen said. "The wages are great, and they don't have huge student loan bills."

He sees a looming labor gap over the next five to 10 years, with not enough workers entering the pipeline to replace retiring tradespeople.

ABC initiatives, including national craft and construction competitions, play a key role in exposing young people to career opportunities.

"It fosters development among young people working toward careers in the trades or on the professional management side," he said.

Madsen also points to immigration policy as a practical workforce issue.

"With immigration, there's got to be a way for people to be here legally and contribute," he said. "The approach of removing everyone isn't practical. Let's allow them to work, pay taxes, and be part of the American dream."

Market Stability—and Olympic Opportunity

Unlike more volatile regions, Madsen describes Utah's steel market as steady.

"We don't have as high of highs or as low of lows—we're pretty consistent," he said.

Looking ahead, the 2034 Winter Olympics is expected to drive another wave of infrastructure and development.

"We've got the Olympics coming in 2034; that will bring infrastructure and other projects," Madsen said. "I expect to see similar impacts to what we saw in 2002."

Even amid broader national uncertainty, he remains optimistic about the region.

"I don't think we'll see the same type of recession other parts of the country might experience," he said.

Navigating Tariffs and Technology

Still, challenges remain—particularly in material pricing.

"With tariffs being a ping pong ball the past year, steel prices over the last six to eight months have steadily gone up," Madsen said. "Every time there's a rumor of a tariff, costs go up, and lead times get longer."

At the same time, he's watching the rise of artificial intelligence with measured interest—but little concern for its impact on skilled trades.

"AI is not going to plumb your house; it's not going to build a building," he said.

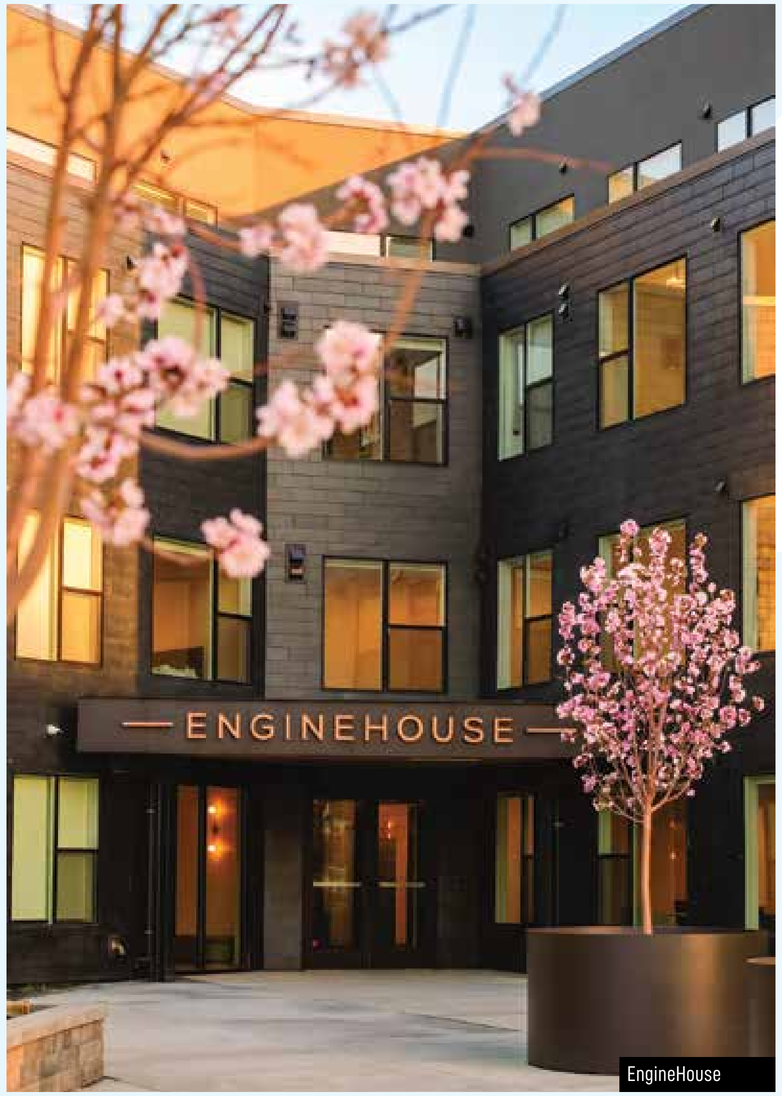
He points to a recent experience with a window installation crew where a trainee had transitioned out of an IT career after recognizing the disruptive potential of AI.

"He saw the writing on the wall," Madsen said. "Now he's learning a trade and even looking at starting a business with his family." ››


The Focal


Cyprus High School


Davis Aqueduct Reach Parallel Pipeline



EngineHouse


Schreiber Foods


Seraph

ABC Utah Excellence in Construction Awards

It's another banner year for ABC Utah members, with the Chapter honoring a host of individuals and projects completed in 2025 with its Excellence in Construction Awards.

Centerville-based J. Fisher Companies earned the top project award—Champion of the Year—for EngineHouse, a thoughtfully designed workforce housing community in Park City. Built with sustainable practices and a focus on long-term livability, the development blends modern construction with Park City's distinctive mountain character.

Other top honors included:

2025 Contractor of the Year: Kapp Construction

2025 Subcontractor of the Year: J&M Steel Solutions

2025 Committee Champion of the Year: Paige Bauer

In addition, ABC Utah presented another 31 project awards—with the category winners listed here:

Commercial Office Under $2 Million
Gladwell Construction—Jon J. Peterson Construction Office Remodel

Commercial Office Over $2 Million
Big-D Construction—St. George City Hall

Cultural/Entertainment Over $5 Million
Westland Construction—Spanish Fork Recreation Center

Electrical Over $2 Million
Helix Electric—Howick Apartments

Mechanical
V.O. Brothers Mechanical—Schreiber Foods

Green Sustainable Over $5 Million
BHI—Hornshadow

Public Works Over $2 Million
Big-D Construction—Sandy Fire Station 31

Higher Education Under $5 Million
Gladwell Construction—Utah State University Eastern Student Center

Industrial Warehouse Over $2 Million
J&M Steel Solutions—Northrop Grumman Expansion

Commercial Multi-Family Over $5 Million
J. Fisher Construction—EngineHouse

K-12 Facilities Over $5 Million
Westland Construction—Cyprus High School

Renovation Over $2 Million
Big-D Construction—Seraph

Exteriors Under $1 Million
Mountain States Fence—South Salt Lake Sheriff Office Building Perimeter Fencing

Commercial Mixed-Use Over $2 Million
Pentalon Construction—The Focal

Landscape Over $1 Million
Sinc Constructors—Utah State Capitol North Building & Central Plaza

Tilt-Up Over $5 Million
Big-D Construction—O.C. Tanner Warehouse

Tenant Improvement Over $1 Million
KIER Construction—Ogden-Hinckley Airport Terminal Expansion

Historical Restoration Less than $2 Million
Gladwell Construction—Fort Douglas Museum

Commercial Retail Over $2 Million
Big-D Construction—Lagoon Carousel Candy Shop & Peacock Parlour

Underground Utilities Over $1 Million
Whitaker Construction—Davis Aqueduct Reach Parallel Pipeline

Other Specialty Construction
Big-D Construction—Trans-Jordan Waste Facility ■

Q&A

Clio Rayner Dishes on State of the Architectural Industry in Utah

Clio Rayner, LEED AP BD+C, is a Principal and 21-year veteran at Salt Lake-based GSBS Architects and currently serves as President of the American Institute of Architects, Utah Chapter (AIA Utah).

Rayner's professional interests are rooted in education, environmental stewardship and community impact. She comes from a family of teachers and has a passion for advancing quality education through design.

She joined GSBS in 2005 after earning her Master of Architecture from the University of Utah, building a career centered on sustainable design, education-focused architecture, and civic engagement. A licensed Utah architect since 2009, the firm credits Rayner with helping guide its sustainability mission, playing an important role in the certification of more than 30 LEED projects. She was elevated to Principal in 2020 and elected to GSBS Architects' Board of Directors in 2025.

Rayner has been active in Utah's design and sustainability communities as a speaker, advocate, and volunteer, serving in multiple organizations focused on architectural career development and sustainability within the built environment.

UC+D spoke to her about her current role as AIA Utah President and a leading professional voice for architects statewide.

UC+D: ***What's exciting about AIA Utah right now?***

Rayner: We are always trying to identify new ways to provide value to our members. AIA Utah has hired MarketLink to help us align our message in Reflexion, Punchlist and social media and find new ways to reach our members. We are looking for ways to celebrate the work of our committees and highlight them in our communication. Over the last few years, we have had great administrative support and we are building momentum.

UC+D: ***What are some primary goals you have for the year?***

Rayner: 2025 was a successful year, resulting in expanded program opportunities and realignment of the AIA Utah structure with the goal to increase support and impact. This year we hope to continue that work with a focus on member participation, representation of the many voices within AIA Utah and partnership with other organizations, like American Society of Landscape Architects, Women in Architecture, National Organization of Minority Architects, American Council of Engineering Companies, Associated General Contractors, and many others.

UC+D: ***What's positive about Utah's architecture/design market right now?***

Rayner: The Utah market has been strong for many years, and we are growing as a community in both impact and influence. This makes our market attractive to new clients and development to support upcoming and distinctive events on the horizon like the 2034 Olympics.

UC+D: ***What are some market headwinds?***

Rayner: One of the most challenging issues in the current market is rapid change and the management of that change. Constant and sometimes unexpected shifts in circumstances are difficult to navigate, and it requires nimble systems and creative thinking to respond. Architects need to apply the same problem solving and design thinking we use for our projects to our practice as well.

UC+D: ***How is your firm navigating AI right now? How do you view AI in the design space now and in the next couple of years?***

Rayner: AI is a complex resource with opportunities and pitfalls. AI is now built into many of the applications we have been using for many years, from communication tools to database management and even design, so we use it in the regular course of business to enhance our processes, but not to replace them. It is important to set up standards and guardrails, but used effectively, AI can allow architects to refocus on creative and critical thinking that can be informed by a rapidly searchable, vast knowledge base.

UC+D: ***What do you like most about being an architect?***

Rayner: One of the best parts about this profession is you never know what you are going to do next. Each day is a new challenge and an opportunity to learn.

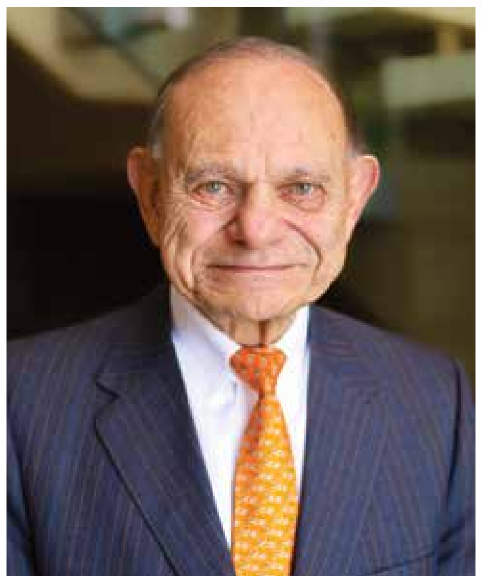
UC+D: ***What is new/exciting about sustainability? I believe you're one of GSBS' key sustainable gurus?***

Rayner: Regenerative design and resilience are two of the new topics driving sustainable design. The focus has shifted from doing less harm to buildings that are a contributing part of an adaptable built ecosystem.

UC+D: ***Where is Utah right now with LEED, Living Building Challenge and other green building initiatives? I know LEED has waned from its peak. Are there other programs that are better/upcoming?***

Rayner: The "right" rating system is dependent on the goals and focus of the client and project. There are a lot of great systems available, and you can select the one that aligns best with your building type, use and vision. ■

DRIVING HARD AT 55


Edward St. John


Daniel Thomas


Mark Cathemer


The six-story, 190,000-SF Grove Tower office building highlights SJP's sprawling 64-acre Valley Grove development in Pleasant Grove. (all photos courtesy St. John Properties)

Baltimore-based St. John Properties marks its "double-nickel" anniversary this year, including an impressive 12-year run in the Beehive State that has seen the firm develop more than 1.4 million SF of space in four main Utah cities under the direction of Daniel Thomas.

By Bradley Fullmer

It's been a dozen years since Daniel Thomas was instructed by Edward St. John, Founder and Chairman of Baltimore-based St. John Properties to "pick a new market," leading Thomas to establish a St. John Properties regional office in Utah.

Over that 12-year period, the reputable commercial real estate developer with a presence in 13 U.S. states has thrived in the Beehive State, with Thomas having spearheaded the development of more than 1.4 million square feet of building space in four main Utah cities, with the majority of it happening at its 128-acre Valley Grove mixed-use community in Pleasant Grove.

Thomas's story, and that of St. John himself, offers a glimpse into how top-level real estate executives operate, and thrive.

Company Roots; Enjoyment Playing Real-Life Monopoly

Edward St. John earned a degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Maryland, College Park in 1961, before founding St. John Properties (SJP) in 1971 in Baltimore. As the company marks 55 years since its founding, St. John reflected on what he has enjoyed about his career, and what continues to drive him.

> "What I've enjoyed most is [...] it's never felt like work—it's always felt like playing Monopoly. I've been playing Monopoly since I was five years old, only now I do it with real buildings and real money."
> — **Edward St. John**

"What I've enjoyed most is [...] it's never felt like work—it's always felt like playing Monopoly," said the 88-year-old St. John. "I've been playing Monopoly since I was five years old, only now I do it with real buildings and real money.

"It's fun—tremendously fun. That's what keeps me going," he continued. "Of course, you have to be cautious in this business. You can't just keep pushing forward without caution, or you'll get into trouble. But at its core, it's still exciting to me and something I enjoy every day. Beyond that, there's a strong sense of pride in what we've built. We've set the standard and are now looked up to across the industry. But at the end of the day, what stands out most is the enjoyment."

To date, SJP has developed, constructed, and owns a portfolio of more than 25 million SF of primarily flex/research and development buildings, along with retail, and office space serving some 2,700 clients. The firm recently delved into multifamily development, with over 3,000 apartment units to date and more coming down the pipe.

The company has assets valued north of $5.5 billion, and a slew of industry awards under its belt, including 2018 NAIOP National Developer of the Year, 1st Place (large business category) Best Places to Work in 2020 by Baltimore Business Journal, and recognition for its sustainability prowess from the U.S. Green Building Council for having more than 130 projects earn LEED Certification.

St. John is also renowned for his philanthropic work, having established the Edward St. John Foundation in 1998, a 501(c)3 non-profit that aims to provide financial assistance to formal education programs. To date, the foundation has donated more than $56 million.

Thomas' Winding Journey from West Coast to East Coast to the Wasatch Mountains

A native of Portland, Oregon, Daniel Thomas earned a Bachelor of Real Estate Finance and Master of Real Estate Development from Portland State in 2006, landing a job doing land acquisitions at Portland-based Riverside Homes.»

Upon being laid off during the Great Recession in 2008, Thomas ventured across the continent to the east coast to attend Johns Hopkins Carey Business School in Baltimore, graduating from the Edward St. John Real Estate and Infrastructure Program in 2009. With slim pickings in the real estate market at that time, he took an uninspiring job with the Army Corp of Engineers, quickly feeling like a fish out of water.

"It wasn't a good fit—it drove me crazy," Thomas recalled. "I was young and ambitious. I wanted the world, and I'd go to work and nothing was moving at a speed that was acceptable to me."

One day he got a random call from a former Johns Hopkins professor he had apparently impressed, who said to Thomas, "Hey, Edward St. John was looking through his resume drawer at the school. You might want to give him a call."

"At first, I said no," he said. "I thought, 'This is my first secure job in a long time. I hate it, but it's 2009 and it's a paycheck. Why would I go work for a developer'? It bothered me for about a day, and then I thought, 'I walked through a door with his name over it for a year and I never even reached out; I don't even know who he is. I better at least call and say thank you'. So, it started with a simple expression of gratitude. I called, got his assistant, and said, 'Please just pass along a thank you'. She called back an hour later and said, 'Ed wants to meet with you.' He offered me the position. There's way more to the story, and it's pretty neat how it all happened, but that was the start."

Thomas was hired as a "partner in training" and spent five years under St. John's tutelage, an experience he described as "priceless", learning everything from leasing, to construction, to property management.

> "It was like a Ph.D. layered on top of everything else. You can go to school and learn the theory and analytics, but to spend five years in a highly productive, highly effective environment and see how it all really works—and not just watch it but participate in it—that was incredible."
>
> — Daniel Thomas

"It was like a Ph.D. layered on top of everything else," said Thomas. "You can go to school and learn the theory and analytics, but to spend five years in a highly productive, highly effective environment and see how it all really works—and not just watch it but participate in it—that was incredible."

It was definitely hands-on work, with considerable time spent in the field with boots and a tool belt.

"I learned how to change filters in rooftop units and sweep warehouses," he said. "My first day on the job involved a broom. We have a whole division focused on maintenance and customer service. The face of our company to our clients is often the maintenance team. We're a real estate company, but with nearly 25 million square feet of tenants, you really become a service company. If you own it, you manage it."

After five years, St. John told Thomas it was time to spread his wings and "pick a new [geographic] market" to start developing in.

Utah—The Right Place

Thomas, who is a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, obviously knew a little bit about the Beehive State due to it being the Church's headquarters, but was not privy to how Utah's economy was functioning.

"Growing up in the Pacific Northwest, I had been through Utah and skied here. But professionally, I knew nothing about the market or the economy," he said.

He got to work researching various markets. He looked at Texas, but couldn't picture becoming a Texan for the next 30-plus years.

"If I was going to move somewhere, it needed to be a place I could live the rest of my life," he conceded. "I also looked at Portland, where I had started my career, and Seattle, which is basically a larger Portland. Then I looked at Salt Lake City."

He did a deep analytical dive into those three markets; all had pros and cons, but he realized he didn't want the frustrations of the Pacific Northwest regulatory environment, nor did he want to try and steal market share in an established, slower-growth market.

"Then I looked at Utah, and the business case just jumped off the page," he said, citing Utah's impressive demographics and strong population growth. He quickly decided the Beehive State was the right place to give it a go, moving here with his young family in July 2014.

St. John approved of Thomas' instincts, despite not knowing much himself about Utah beyond its world-class ski slopes.

"At the time, Utah had been ranked by Forbes as one of the most business-friendly states in the country—that certainly caught my attention," said St. John. "Personally, I didn't know the market in a deep business sense at that point—I knew Utah mostly from skiing. But what fascinated me was the population dynamic. It's a relatively small state population-wise, but it's highly concentrated around Salt Lake City. That creates a kind of density and energy in one area that's very attractive from a real estate perspective."

"In a growing market, you can establish a foothold and grow with it—that was appealing to me," Thomas explained. "I also looked at the business-friendly environment. At that time, Utah was consistently being recognized nationally, and, under Governor Herbert, there was a big push for Utah being seen as the No. 1 state for business."

Whether some of that was PR or not, the fundamentals made sense.

"And then there was the lifestyle question: Where do I want to live? Where do I want my kids to go to school? Where do I want to recreate?" Thomas continued. "Unless you're a skier, maybe you don't understand it the same way, but you'd be hard-pressed to find a better place in the country to work and also have an incredible lifestyle—cost of living, recreation, community. Whether it's the LDS community or just the broader culture, I found Utah to be very welcoming."

Quickly Making Hay in a Bustling Market

Right before making the move out west, Thomas said St. John told him, semi-facetiously, "'Go out there are call me in a year. Spend a year getting to know the market, then call me when you've got something. Don't rush it—just get to know the market and find something'," recalled Thomas.

By January 2015, he had a deal in place for 20 acres of raw land in Pleasant Grove just east of I-15, closing it in April and setting off on building a retail pad that included a Starbucks, single-story office buildings, and the centerpiece of Phase I—Grove Tower, a six-story Class A office building. Thomas moved SJP's office from downtown Salt Lake to Valley Grove and continued aggressively pursuing deals.

Over the past 11-plus years, Valley Grove has become a multi-phase, 128-acre development, with two smaller deals in March adding seven acres. Other notable deals in Utah include acquiring 19 acres in Taylorsville off I-215, 17 acres in rapidly-growing Saratoga Springs, and 19 acres in Marriott-Slaterville in Weber County.

Thomas said Edward St. John's strategy has typically been to develop and hold, which Thomas said sums up his "building the empire" philosophy.

"If you sell, you create tax implications, and then have to replace the asset," said Thomas, who today serves as the firm's Regional Partner for Utah. "He loves to build and own, and so do I. That's our financial model."

In addition to Maryland and Utah, Thomas said SJP kicked off a larger expansion across the U.S., establishing offices in Austin, Dallas, Tampa Bay, Raleigh, Charlotte, Nashville, and Delaware all within the last five years.

"For years, St. John Properties was known as the largest private landowner in Maryland, just because we had been developing there so long," said Thomas. "Once you start reaching capacity in a home market, expanding into secondary and tertiary markets makes sense. I believe we are now building more square footage outside Maryland than inside Maryland."

Regarding building type, Thomas said, "Ed's bread and butter has always been small-bay flex industrial space—16- to 18-foot clear-height light industrial flex—and that's still the bulk of the portfolio. Of the company's nearly 25 million square feet, about 16 million square feet is flex space. Retail is around two million square feet, and the balance would be office."»

Valley Grove lobby.

Starbucks is a prominent Valley Grove retail tenant.

12th Street Exchange retail pad in Marriott-Slaterville.

Acting as Owner/GC Offers Tremendous Value, Efficiency

While Thomas hired three different local general contractors for the initial retail pad, two single-level office buildings, and Grove Tower, he had stumbled upon Mark Cathemer during the first of those projects in 2016, quickly hiring him to serve as Owner's Rep on the six-story office building. Since then, Cathemer has steered the construction of every SJP project in its Utah portfolio, which has proved invaluable to the firm the past decade.

"My background was working for large general contractors, so the transition was natural," said Cathemer, SJP's Vice President of Construction for Utah, who manages a team of seven professionals. "It was really nice coming here and setting up a construction department as the owner-developer-general contractor. Decisions get made in real time—it's fast and streamlined. We're building a team that has the long-term interests of St. John Properties in mind—not just for one building, but for how that building fits into the portfolio for 40-plus years."

"It's not a profit center for us," added Thomas. "We don't do third-party work. It's all at cost. One of the biggest advantages is design. We use third-party architects, but with the GC in-house and aligned with the owner, we can make design and construction decisions that benefit a long-term hold.

Some of these buildings may see 10 different tenants over their lifespan, so we design and build with that in mind. That's different from the way a lot of general contractors might approach a project."

"We also have a very integrated process—development, construction, interior design, property management, leasing—all working together to make decisions that are more tenant-focused," Cathemer emphasized.

"Most of our buildings are repeat buildings—they're prototypical, and financially it makes sense to bring [the general contractor] in-house," Thomas added, "If I was going to build a large apartment complex, I'd want a GC who has done that, because I don't know how to build that product. But office, flex, [and inline retail], Mark and his team can handle it. We currently have nine buildings under construction, plus six tenant improvements projects. We run very lean."

Bullish on Utah's Future; Possible Expansion Into Multifamily

Despite recent headwinds including sticky interest rates, rising costs for land, fuel, and construction, as well as geopolitical uncertainty, Thomas remains bullish that Utah is a solid development market now and will be well into the future, and he is committed to remaining aggressive in pursuit of new deals.

"Utah is still such a good market," said Thomas. "It's not without challenges, but there are so many things here that line up for success. It is different than it was 10 years ago. Back then, you could almost build anything and get bailed out by the strength of the economy. Now, you have to be more careful. Not everything works as well as you hoped it would, but the fundamentals are still strong—job growth, population growth. It'll be interesting to see what AI does to the tech industry and how that affects demand for space. We're definitely watching that."

Thomas also believes there is ample—but certainly not unlimited—land available along the Wasatch Front for future development opportunities.

"You hear people say, 'We're running out of land.' And yes, the mountains create some constraints. But if you zoom out on Google Earth, there is still a lot of land," said Thomas. "Look at Pleasant Grove—this interchange has been here for 20 years, and now we own all of this. You drive down North County Boulevard into Lindon and there are still 80 to 100 acres of prime land. Head toward Saratoga Springs, Eagle Mountain, Herriman, Payson, Springville, Mapleton, or west toward Tooele—overall, Utah is still ripe for growth. And I think the state is ahead of it. They're putting in infrastructure like Mountain View Corridor and preparing for that growth. I think the state does a really good job trying to stay ahead of it."

While SJP's recently established its Multifamily Construction Division that will build multifamily projects near the company's headquarters in Maryland, with the eventual goal of helping construct multifamily projects throughout the country, multifamily is the one building type Thomas has yet to tackle in Utah. Although the demand will likely be strong for the foreseeable future, he isn't rushing into it just for the sake of enhancing the portfolio.

"I have to recognize that I don't yet know how to do [multifamily]—not end to end," he admitted. "Could we build it? Absolutely. But to design it, own it, manage it, lease it, and finance it—that's different. A little retail building might cost a few million dollars. An office building might cost $40 million. A multifamily project […] could be $150 million to $180 million. That's not a 'Let's try this and see what happens' kind of project. We need to get there, and I think we will, but it's not something I'm ready to go out and do today with our current local expertise."

As for St. John, he's been ultimately pleased with the results Thomas, and his team of 20 employees, has produced to date.

"It's been fabulous for us—the growth has been tremendous," said St. John. "When we first started looking at land, we couldn't afford some of the more established areas—the prices were simply too high. So, we moved further south to Pleasant Grove, where land was more attainable, and that decision proved to be a great one.

"What's remarkable is how much the area has transformed," he continued. "I remember standing on the sixth floor of Grove Tower […] and looking out at what was essentially just open land. Today, that same view is filled with buildings, retail, and activity. It's a great market, and it's only getting better."

Thomas expects St. John to maintain his stamina as the SJP empire expands.

"If Mr. St. John has anything to say about it, he's going to keep working another 20 years," he said. "He thinks he's going to live to 120—he really believes the science is out there. He's in the office every day. He's still incredibly sharp and very aware of every building we're developing out here. He still gives me a lot of advice, direction, and recommendations. I couldn't ask for a better mentor or business partner." ■

SJP executives wield ceremonial shovels at a groundbreaking event from 2018 in Pleasant Grove.

NEW PATHE FORWARD

From its history as Prescott Muir & Associates to its new look as Pathe Studio Architects, the 50-year-old firm looks to the future with excitement as it builds on decades of architectural rigor.

By Taylor Larsen

Zions Bank Jackson Branch

Medical Manufacturing Facility Draper Campus

Zions Bank Regional Financial Center

The Magnolia

Weber County Library Pleasant Valley Branch

It's a moody spring day on the bike ride over to what was once Prescott Muir & Associates' office on Pierpont in Salt Lake. Flower petals, leaves, and buds are all over, thrown onto the streets and sidewalks by rain that Governor Spencer Cox and others have been praying for, and wind that I have been praying will go away.

But the weather can't foul up what's going on in the firm's upstairs office, where all of those who worked under the practice's previous name continue under a new one—Pathe Studio Architects—branching out from roots growing for over 50 years.

Premise

Prescott Muir, the firm's original namesake and founder, shaped the early direction of the practice when it began in 1976. He, along with Jack Robertson and others, developed legacy practices and a solid portfolio of work across various markets.

The firm adapted historic industrial spaces to modern uses, like the "Uncommons" restaurant space in downtown Salt Lake; created artistic forms that elevated architecture and even the arts themselves, like the Rose Wagner Theater a few blocks to the west; and designed community hubs that have strengthened their respective municipalities.

Original partners gradually divested from the firm in phases that culminated in 2019, but their work lives on in "BLOX", the adaptive reuse of the former Paragon Press printing facility and grain silo. The site is as industrial as its adaptation to the firm's modern office space is spectacular.

Megan Clark, Partner and Architect, pointed to the simplicity of building details throughout that recall the mentorship and memories of Robertson, whom she trained under when she began working for the firm in 2012. Featured steel beams, clerestory windows, and board-formed concrete are noteworthy examples of the firm's eye for elevated architecture.

Clark may be the newest Partner (2025), but she and fellow Pathe Studio Architects Partners and Architects Jay Lems (2011), Jared Larson (2014), and Cecilia Uriburu (2018) said that, throughout the firm's history, the entire team has worked within an ethos where the architectural process matters as much as the fully constructed result.

That path is constant, even if the firm's name has changed. "Pathe" (pronounced "path") isn't the architects' idea of Utah spelling—the firm's rebranded name comes from the Greek word πάθη (pronounced "pathē") rooted in pathos, the appeal to emotion. Pathe, the partners explained, "conveys experience or feeling [...] and speaks to how architecture is encountered and understood over time." The pronunciation of the firm's name holds meaning too, emphasizing movement, sequence, and the deliberate process through which ideas are developed and realized within design.

Quality and Commitment

Creating spellbinding projects à la architectural magic, the four tell me, takes some conjuring.

Sometimes it's translating what the engineers say, made easier by the fact that, Uriburu said with a laugh, "We're as geeky as they are. We want to be in the weeds as much as they are."

The impetus comes from curiosity. "We are asking questions of our engineers and craftsman because we want to know how this works," said Clark.

Speaking a shared language is a common refrain during the interview. It makes sense—it's all Greek if no one is aligned. Lems, the longest tenured at the firm, recounted how his history as a stonemason and foreman provides him with the language and expertise to relate with builders. It's an ability he and fellow partners continually look to cultivate by developing precise, accurate, and constructible details.

"I get that it's hard; I get that there are challenges to executing the precision of our drawings," Lems said of dialogues with builders. "But we do a really good job ››

Pathe Studio Architects Partners (from L-R): Cecilia Uriburu, Jay Lems, Megan Clark, Jared Larson. (All images courtesy Pathe Studio Architects)

> "We do a really good job in our studio in designing and developing the details that can be well-understood and well-executed in the field."
> — Jay Lems

in our studio in designing and developing the details that can be well-understood and well-executed in the field."

High standards, full alignment.

"We're working with contractors that know our drawings and specifications as well as we do," said Uriburu. Architectural rigor was pressed onto the team like a printing typecast from day one, Uriburu continued, "because that quality is what our clients expect."

The Practice

Pathe doesn't play favorites from a longstanding group of clients, but its work with the Weber County Library System sounds particularly special. What began with design of the Huntsville Branch in 1999 turned into a master plan for additional libraries as the firm won the design contract for the Pleasant Valley Branch in Washington Terrace.

In 2012, the Weber County Library System began to execute its master plan to better serve its patrons, selecting a design partnership of Prescott Muir & Associates and Salt Lake-based EDA to renovate three existing libraries and design the new Weber County Southwest Branch and Headquarters in Roy. EDA took on two renovations and Prescott Muir & Associates took on one renovation and the new build.

Lems said the design for that new headquarters building loops in his mind—it's a good thing. The design documents for the project were a tome of architectural detail. Lems noted that the team collectively developed over 700 sheets of drawings to ensure construction could be executed to the highest level.

Such precision, Lems explained, "required involvement from the entire studio. [...] It was a big milestone for us."

The project was an award-winner—AIA Mountain Region "Merit Award"; AIA Utah "Honor Award"; the American Institute of Steel Construction "Ideas2 - Platinum Award"—and Clark said clients return to Pathe because the level of commitment demonstrated in work there and across the firm's entire portfolio.

Uriburu said contractors that don't win the firm's bids have phoned in to tell the designers, "how meaningful it was to see a completely detailed set of drawings."—the meaning isn't lost on Pathe.

"We make sure that drawings aren't just buried in a drawer," said Clark. Leaving no stone unturned allows for challenges and experiences from past projects inform what's next.

Uriburu said those reflections bring up questions like: "Where were we five years ago? What did our vendors say? What did we learn?"

When the answers arrive, Uriburu said, "The legacy continues. The high quality continues."

Fresh People, Fresh Perspective Fresh Brand

The continued, high standard shows up in hiring, too. The firm has always sought after talented architects and designers fresh out of school. Uriburu and Clark said this "secret sauce" of mentoring young architects within the office helps maintain a shared design language and reinforces consistency in how projects are developed and delivered.

The two with the longest tenure know the strategy firsthand.

"I've only had two jobs," said Lems, whose story reminds me of a "two truths and a lie" icebreaker—the difference is that his story is all true. Starting at a young age, he worked under his father, Henry Lems, as a stonemason, working summers and weekends into high school and college. Up at the University of Utah, Lems took his first architectural course: basic design under instructor Tom Kass.

Lems's career trajectory from stonemason to architect was fully mapped out by the end of the day, telling his father over the phone, "The good news is I know what I want to do," recalled Lems. "The bad news is that I quit."

After earning a Master of Architecture (2001) from the University of Utah, Lems started his second ever job at Prescott Muir & Associates that same year.

Larson is another whose first post-graduation job landed him at the firm. After taking a University of Utah studio course, with Lems as one of the instructors, Larson graduated with a Master of Architecture (2008) and joined the firm.

"I have had the privilege of continuing mentorship under Jay and the other partners," said Larson. "Mentorship has been the most impactful process in my career and the method to keep growing the firm and ensure quality."

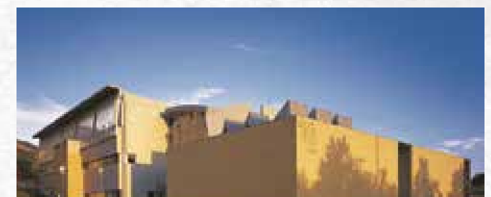
Getting an architect to commit to the level of rigor required of Pathe's 18-member team is best done through green shoots, but, Clark added, those doing excellent work, regardless of experience level, will fit right in, saying: "We rely on everybody."

As the newest partner, I have to ask her: is the new role much different than before?

"There's more," said Clark. More focus on the macro; more responsibility in building the team up and inspiring them. She may love the times when she gets to lose herself in design, but seeing and executing the vision, and recognizing that it comes from the team, has helped her to embody what leadership is all about, she said: "embracing people."

James L. Sorenson Molecular Biotechnology Building

Marcia & John Price Museum Building (UMFA)



Ethel Wattis Kimball Visual Arts Building

Rose Wagner Performing Arts Center

Uriburu's story is more unique: she is the only one to have left since beginning her career at Prescott Muir & Associates in 2005. "I needed to get my own exposure," she said. In 2018, after a dozen years at another local firm, she travelled back up the Prescott Muir & Associates-designed silo staircase and back through the firm's iconic pivot door on the third floor, telling me, "I came back home."

Realignment

The pandemic transformed the nature of their work in the years after the early partners fully divested. Clark mentioned how strange it was to close a deal and earn business without meeting a client in person. Trust, the critical component of every relationship, had gone fully digital.

There were thorns.

Training designers to deliver the craft of architecture without the nuances that come from spending the workday with teammates was more challenging. But instead of fragmenting, the team further coalesced under the shared commitment to clients and contractors dedicated to high design.

And there were roses.

Clark and Uriburu both mentioned how the work-life balance became far healthier than the stereotypical architect burning the candle at both ends. The work didn't slow down, but the people did, emphasizing intentionality to work within the new constraints.

Those who needed to be remote had that opportunity more often, and those with children were encouraged to be parents first.

"Especially as moms, there was no way you could have the life I have today, where I can do so many other things," Uriburu emphasized, "and be an architect."

Leadership has embraced accessibility and proactivity in mentorship, with Lems mentioning lunch-and-learn trainings as a best practice. These focused trainings run the gamut of introductory to highly technical, where everyone is expected to step up and lead a weekly session—reviewing a recently completed project, informing the team about code changes, or a recent "passion point" for Lems: going over best practices on high-performance building design.

"We're very involved through the construction process. And we want to be," he said.

For a Zions Bank project in Jackson, Wyoming, Pathe teammates have taken the same journey as the project's limestone façade: visiting the quarry, developing shop drawings in concert with the mason, overseeing masonry fabrication, and ensuring the quality constructed matches the precision identified within the drawings and the expectations of both architect and owner.

New Pathe Forward

What's next?

"We have an exciting diversity in project types and clients including theater space, cinema, library, fire stations, commercial and residential," said Larson. An interesting, diverse, and resilient mix of projects and clients mean Pathe Studio Architects will continue nurturing its detail-oriented roots.

The growth the partners expect, Lems said, is one of experience and dedication over firm size—more bonsai than aspen—as Salt Lake City, Utah, and the Mountain West continue to bloom around them.

Consistent amidst it all is the path forward. ■

Prescott Muir & Associates - Pathe Studio Architects Top Projects

Project	Location	Completion Date
Rose Wagner Performing Arts Center	Salt Lake City	1997
University of Utah Marcia & John Price Museum Building (UMFA)	Salt Lake City	2001
Weber State University Ethel Wattis Kimball Visual Arts Building	Ogden	2002
Weber County Library Pleasant Valley Branch	Washington Terrace	2009
University of Utah James L. Sorenson Molecular Biotechnology Building	Salt Lake City	2012
Weber County Library Southwest Branch	Roy	2016
The Magnolia	Salt Lake City	2021
Zions Bank Regional Financial Center	Vernal	2024
Medical Manufacturing Facility Draper Campus	Draper	2026
Zions Bank Jackson Branch*	Jackson, WY	2027

*under construction

Weber County Library Southwest Branch

“So You Want to Be an Architect?”

The famous quote from Jacoby Architects founder Bob Jacoby is a foundational motto for a firm centered on care, process, and intentionality that has designed legacy-defining projects across Utah.

Jacoby Architects (from L-R): Karla Trejo, Kraig Wilkes, Sanae Adams, Joe Jacoby, Bob Jacoby, Eric Jacoby, Alina Kowalczyk, Daryl Christiansen. (opposite) Founder Bob Jacoby kicks his feet up and designs from his office in the early days of the firm. (all images courtesy Jacoby Architects)

By Taylor Larsen

It’s a “family” reunion of sorts at the Jacoby Architects office when I stop by to hear about the firm’s 50th anniversary.

While we converse, the conversation starts with Bob, who tells the story of being a teenager in Idaho Falls, cleaning his father’s insurance office as well as the architectural firm’s next door.

“I’d see drawings and so forth, and it looked very intriguing,” said Bob, 79. He said time spent marveling at drawings and architectural models wasn’t the reason he pursued the trade, but it did draw him in like a magnet.

As high school came around, Bob recalled an early job drafting piping systems—without the help of a pantograph, let alone AutoCAD—using ruling pens to guide the hand-drawn lines before taking an X-ACTO knife to cut the line ends.

It was a different age, he says, maybe even a better one for what it meant to design the built environment, where the manual focus early on deepened his insights and understanding of architecture.

“One thing about drafting I found is that when you’re drawing, you’re forced to be intentional. That line is a lot more meaningful because you can’t just redo it—you’re into what that line does and what it represents,” he said.

Bob attended the University of Utah (U of U), earning a Bachelor of Arts in Architecture (1970) and Master of Architecture (1972). During school, he worked for an architecture firm where he met his wife, Rebecca. After two more professional stops along the way, Bob ventured out on his own and founded Robert Jacoby and Associates in 1976. That same year, he and Rebecca were building a house while she was pregnant with Eric.

“It was pretty naive,” Bob said of doing it all at once.

Raising Future Architects

As the firm progressed, Bob and Rebecca’s sons Joe and Eric Jacoby grew, tinkering and building away in the wood shop and learning the early design process on a child-size scale. Those efforts taught them about construction, but the two laugh that the real “exposure” came from laboring on that first house as they learned millwork, roofing, irrigation, and more.

The home away from home was Bob’s office in the historic Crane Building, where the firm resided from 1979 to 2011. “That was like our daycare,” said Joe. Growing up with an architect father and graphic designer mother further nurtured he and Eric’s creative instincts. “We were always at the office at a young age, running blueprints, organizing drawers, and building models.”

As the boys left to strike out on their own, Eric spent his undergraduate time at the U of U (B.A., Architecture, 1999) before venturing west to attend the University of California, Berkeley for his Master of Architecture (2002) and practicing for two years in San Francisco. He then journeyed east—way east—all the way to Europe, honing his craft for two years in London and Edinburgh and another year in the Netherlands.

Eric, 49, and Joe, 46, joke that, even with similar paths, they hardly overlapped as they both hopscotched across the same areas at different times.

Joe’s collegiate experience began and ended at Berkeley (B.S., Architecture, 2001; Master of Architecture, 2005), with an internship jump across the pond in London and a jump back to practice and teach in the Bay Area wedged in between.

Both returned to Utah to work for the firm in 2005; the newly named Jacoby Architects. One part of the firm’s history they couldn’t change was Bob’s humble style—get the job done and move on to the next one. ››

One problem.

"We didn't have any photos," said Joe. There were a few wooden models, but "we had no documentation of the work Bob had done."

The past and present principals are full of laughs recalling those early days working together, starting with a massive interview for Utah State University's (USU) future Animal, Teaching and Research Facility. Joe and Bob scrambled for whatever they could to present to their potential client, eventually finding one of Bob's watercolor paintings of a barn.

"We're showing the Dean of the College of Agriculture a watercolor of a barn," Joe recounted of the interview, "And Bob is so charming that everyone just ate it up."

Wilkes Joins In;
Firm's Ethos Emerges

That watercolor barn served as inspiration for what became The Matthew Hillyard Animal, Teaching and Research Center when it completed in 2007. Unbeknownst to the firm at the time, the inspiration was one of many catalysts that brought Kraig Wilkes into the firm a few years later.

Wilkes, 41, grew up as a "Cache Valley kid", and said the building's orientation and modern barn approach sat picturesque within Cache Valley's pastoral landscapes, and sat in his mind as he attended the University of Utah (B.A., Architecture, 2011; Master of Architecture, 2013).

With diplomas in hand, Wilkes sought out firms that prioritized the design process while holding tight to the magic and creativity of architecture. After browsing Jacoby Architects' website—replete with plenty of photos of its work—Wilkes went in for interviews, finding the Jacobys out landscaping their front office.

Much like the Jacobys, Wilkes's early professional development came from building; summers spent with his uncle constructing houses near Bear Lake. The time deepened his understanding of constructability and emphasized an oft-overlooked component of architecture: clarity.

"We're always discussing how we can make it clear for the contractor," said Wilkes, who officially joined the firm in 2013 and currently serves as the firm's Sustainability Coordinator. "Eric is always saying, 'Think about when the contractor is up there, and his hands are really cold, and he's trying to look at the drawings and build at the same time.'"

Eric, the firm's Technical Director, said delivering clarity is a constantly refined and improved process made better by working with an extensive network of like-minded trade partners.

"We're on the site, and contractors will tell us, 'If we go about it differently, this is going to be better.' And I really love when they can bring years of their expertise to the table," Eric said. "Now that's driving how I'm thinking about the next detail I'm working on."

By aligning through clarity across the design and construction process, Jacoby Architects have designed for architecture with a degree of craftsmanship that leaves owners delighted.

Continuing in Higher Education,
Clinical Services

It's a perspective that seasons Jacoby Architects' practice, especially after tasting success with the USU job, which Joe, Jacoby Architects' President and Director of Design, said was "our gateway to higher education."

Others included USU's Early Childhood Education and Research Center and the U of U's student housing project for the Honors College. The latter—a design-build with Grammoll Construction—earned high praise from the college's housing director, who called the architects "the dream team".

Another defining project was USU's Clinical Services Building.

"All our competitors were teamed with national firms," Joe recalled. But not Jacoby Architects. The question naturally arose as stakeholders looked at what was then a five-person firm: "How come you aren't teamed with a national firm?"

Joe's answer wasn't about Jacoby Architects, but the owner: "Because you don't need it."

Winning the design contract vindicated the firm's commitment to its motto: "Boutique Size, Big Ideas", and changed how Joe thought about the firm.

"We were no longer trying to hide how small we were," he said. Capability was most important, and the firm was more than capable as it designed what became USU's Sorenson Legacy Foundation Center for Clinical Excellence.

"We nailed the program—it was so program-driven," Bob said. "I look back at the design of that… it's just spectacular. It's just a beautiful building."

The project was Bob's swan song before he retired in 2017, but not before Jacoby Architects won work in the health and human services market for Utah Schools for the Deaf and Blind (USDB) and the Utah State Development Center (USDC) years later.

Surprise Call, Word of Mouth
Deliver Unforgettable Moments

When the office phone rang a few years ago, Joe could hardly believe what he was hearing from the other line: "We've seen some of your work up here," Joe remembered Blackstone Products' owner saying. "Would you be interested in designing our office?"

Much like it did to spark Wilkes's initial interest in the firm, Blackstone Products' wanted its office in the same Cache Valley that forever changed the firm's trajectory.

"We went from begging for work and convincing people we could do it," Joe said of the phone call, "to having a company reach out to us because they knew we could."

The result became Weber | Blackstone Corporate Headquarters in Providence, an awe-inspiring design replete with a unique, Prodema panel exterior from Spain that seemingly gives the office flight.

More recent crossroads include breakthroughs in the tech college world, where word-of-mouth from a favorite contractor set the firm on course to win Ogden-Weber Technical College's (OTECH) upcoming Pathway Building that will be completed later this year.

When Salt Lake Community College ››


Emma Eccles Jones Early Childhood Education Research Center


Brigham City Classroom and Student Services Building


Matthew Hillyard Animal, Teaching and Research Facility

State Liquor & Wine Store #1

(SLCC) received the largest donation in campus history from local philanthropist Gail Miller, Jacoby Architects was entrusted to design the college's Larry H. and Gail Miller Business Building, working in concert with a steering committee that considered many stakeholder concerns for a collaborative design, one that will be fully realized when construction wraps up at the end of 2027.

When Worry Equals Care

Jacoby Architects' family-centric environment has been constant over the decades. When Joe and Eric joined in 2005, Bob said clients wanted to see how he and his sons could work together and compliment each other, "and when Kraig showed up as an intern, he just started feeling like a part of the family."

"As the non-Jacoby, it is always fun to be in the office and watch these guys interact," Wilkes said, smiling at how working with the family colored things for the better. Wilkes continued, "It's interesting to see how that actually benefits the work; where the filter is gone; where they don't feel bad hashing things out in a way that maybe you wouldn't do with another employee. [...] I think that has benefited the projects because it allows the full potential of the design to come through."

The family-inspired environment, Wilkes continued, leads the firm to approach potential employees with an expectation that they, too, will approach their work with the honesty and focus their clients deserve.

"It's critical," he said, "and it's so easy to get away from that because your software facilitates you to be able to do so much so quickly."

Talent, he said, isn't near as important as the character required to design with such intentionality and care.

"Worry" is the word Joe uses. I have to laugh—how can worry be a positive thing?

"We worry a lot," he said. "We want to provide something really good, so we try and worry so the owner doesn't have to."

Wilkes said "worry" came through in vivid detail when he became a Principal in 2023, going through "Principal Boot Camp" with Joe.

"Joe told me I need to worry more," Wilkes laughed, recalling all the things he needed to worry about: the firm and its reputation, the team and their trajectories, and how the owner's feel about their projects while working with Jacoby Architects.

As a perpetual worrier myself, maybe worrying has been positive all along.

Wilkes said that concern for the holistic view of architecture came through on a building tour with his family, where his wife explained how touring the facility allowed their five children to appreciate why their dad's work mattered.

"The meaningful architecture we're doing is impacting people and especially families," said Wilkes. Whether its a school, therapy building, or an office, designing spaces that "make you feel better" is what the job is all about.

From Philosophical to Practical

The ethos has kept the firm small, hovering around their current size of 10 people. Said Joe, "It's never been about growing bigger—it's about putting out great architecture one project at a time."

Eric chimed in, "And we're designing some complex buildings."

The firm continues to prioritize challenging, interesting, and demanding work, he continued, "Letting the challenges be difficult [where] the problem becomes the solution."

I'm no philosopher—is that Buddhist? Nietzschean? Or is it "Jacoby-ean"?

Whatever it is, the firm's work on The Elizabeth DeLong School in Springville is a case in point. In designing for those with disabilities, the firm dove headfirst into programming, touring USDB's existing facilities and returning to the office with goggles that simulated different sight impairments—tunnel vision, glaucoma, blindness—experiencing what it would be like, just for a short time, to have the same vision challenges as those served by the organization.

With that experience and context in hand, the firm let architecture do the work to help users enjoy navigating the building. Design incorporated an impressive board-formed concrete wall that serves as tactile and beautiful wayfinding element within the school's central spine. Sensory and mobility considerations emerged in colors, spatial organization, and accessible features across a multitude of specialized classrooms, playing environments, and interior and exterior walkways.

The "problem" of navigating a space with a disability, Eric detailed, received the dignity and architectural splendor that students and staff deserve.

"We're creating a simple solution," he said of the firm's goals in each and every design. "Not a simple-minded solution."

For 50 years—and even more when those early days spent on job sites or the wood shop are tallied up—Jacoby Architects has made the complexity of the built environment look simple. The legacy continues today as the firm delivers a welcome degree of intentionality and breathtaking architecture in the process. ■


Sorenson Legacy Center for Clinical Excellence


Marriott Honors Residential Community


C. Mark Openshaw Education Center

Jacoby Architects Top Projects

Project	Location	Completion Date
USU - Matthew Hillyard Animal, Teaching and Research Facility	Logan	2007
USU - Emma Eccles Jones Early Childhood Education Research Center	Logan	2010
USU - Brigham City Classroom and Student Services Building	Brigham City	2015
USDB - C. Mark Openshaw Education Center	Salt Lake City	2016
USU - Sorenson Legacy Center for Clinical Excellence	Logan	2018
USDB - Elizabeth DeLong School	Springville	2020
DABS - State Liquor & Wine Store #1	Salt Lake City	2024
USDC - Comprehensive Therapy Building	American Fork	2025
Weber | Blackstone Corporate Headquarters	Providence	2026
SLCC - Larry H. & Gail Miller Business Building	Taylorsville	2026*
OTECH - Pathway Building	Ogden	2027*

*under construction


Elizabeth DeLong School

A HALF-CENTURY OF DESIGN EXCELLENCE

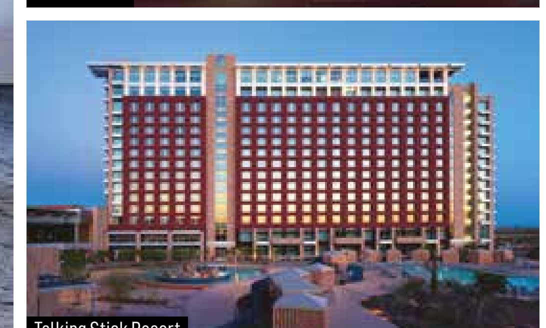
FFKR Architects celebrates its 50th anniversary with fond reverence for its past and a sharp focus on its future.

Salt Lake-based Bio Fire Administration lobby showcases the firm's interior design prowess. (all photos courtesy FFKR)

Salt Lake Temple Restoration

Abravanel Hall

Delta Center



Talking Stick Resort

By Bradley Fullmer

What started out as a bold, brash venture between four talented, strong-willed architects—Robert Fowler, Franklin Ferguson, Ray Kingston and Joe Ruben—has blossomed over a half century of time into one of the most prolific and diverse architectural design firms in the Intermountain West, with Salt Lake-based FFKR Architects boasting four regional offices spanning three states and 170 employees.

In addition to being the largest Utah-based architect by number of employees—with its Salt Lake City headquarters and St. George branch office having 160 combined people—FFKR has consistently been one of the top revenue-producing firms in the Beehive State, ranking first or second every single year since 2015, per annual *UC+D Top Utah Architect Rankings.*

The firm's diversity and sheer ability to design some of the largest and most technically challenging projects across virtually every building market makes it a force to be reckoned with. As it celebrates milestone anniversary No. 50, past and current leaders weighed in on what makes FFKR special and primed for success now and well into the future.

"It's common for architecture firms not to survive to the next generation of ownership, so reaching 50 years is remarkable," surmised Roger Jackson, 69, Principal Emeritus and 42-year veteran of the firm who served as President from 2013-2021 and still works on a part-time basis. "In my mind, it's a tribute to the founders […] for building something sustainable that could be passed from one generation to the next."››

Combining Four Strong Personalities Under One Roof

The roots of FFKR Architects dates back to 1970, when Ferguson and Kingston worked for ENTELEKI Architecture, Planning and Research, a multi-disciplinary practice with offices in Salt Lake and San Francisco. The firm made a name for itself designing ambitious civic projects, including substantial work at Snowbird Resort, with Kingston serving as Principal Planner for 25 years.

An improbable turning point came when the two were invited to team up with Robert Fowler Architects on the Salt Lake City Bicentennial Center for the Arts—which ultimately became the historic Abravanel Hall and Salt Lake Arts Center (completed in 1979). Fowler's firm had been commissioned for the project, beating out ENTELEKI and other firms. Ferguson reportedly sent Fowler a congratulatory note, with Fowler then inviting the rival firm to collaborate on the project. The unique chemistry of the two firms was evident on the highly visible, pressure-packed project, which proved highly successful and prompted the creation of Fowler, Ferguson, Kingston & Ruben in 1976.

Each of the architects was talented, with a strong sense of their respective strengths:

—Fowler brought a strong background in commercial and institutional architecture, along with historic work in downtown Salt Lake City.

—Ferguson drove K-12 educational and large public-sector projects.

—Kingston was an expert master planner, with a specialization in resort design.

—Ruben had expertise with religious and institutional design, in addition to having sharp project leadership skills.

The synergistic culture was immediate, with modern design and planning capabilities spanning most major building markets, a hallmark that continues to this day.

"The firm wasn't expected to last long because the personalities of the four founders were so different," said Jeff Fisher, 72, Principal Emeritus who retired in 2020 after a stellar 43-year career. "They set the tone and had high expectations for anyone who worked here. I have huge respect for Bob and Frank's design talent. Joe was just a good guy, very pleasant. Ray was intense, but a great mentor. I wouldn't be at the table if it wasn't for Ray. Somehow we all made it work."

Fisher, Jackson Among 2nd and 3rd Generation of FFKR Leaders

Fisher, who had previously worked for Habitat Design Group in Salt Lake, joined the firm in 1977, having been hired within a week after returning from a religious service mission in Greensboro, North Carolina. He worked initially under Kingston and Ruben on projects like Mountain View High School in Orem and Northwest Energy office building at the University of Utah's Research Park in Salt Lake.

"It's common for architecture firms not to survive to the next generation of ownership, so reaching 50 years is remarkable. In my mind, it's a tribute to the founders [...] for building something sustainable that could be passed from one generation to the next."

— Roger Jackson

Fisher quickly proved his mettle, and when the firm was commissioned to design a couple of ambitious projects for retail grocery magnate Sam Skaggs—including the American Stores office building and Skaggs Telecommunications building—he essentially became the primary designer for all of Skaggs' projects.

"Sam asked Ray [Kingston] if anyone wanted to work on grocery stores," Fisher recalled. "Nobody wanted to do them, but I said I would and took over grocery store design around 1982. We ended up designing more than 260 Skaggs Alpha-Beta stores in 19 states. Some prototypes repeated for a while, but every community had different design standards, so we constantly adapted them."

Fisher's work with Skaggs proved profitable and helped carry the firm through the economic drudgery of the mid-80s, and he was made a Principal in 1986 for his efforts.

Jackson was hired immediately after graduating from the University of Utah in 1984 and spent his formative years under the tutelage of Ruben initially, and later Fisher, after the former passed away from cancer at age 57 in January 1993.

Jackson's first project was done in tandem with Ruben—converting the historic Hotel Utah into the Joseph Smith Memorial Building for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—a nearly seven-year endeavor and set the course for his career as a religious and institutional design guru. Ruben gave Jackson ample opportunities to figure things out on his own, which proved invaluable.

"He would encourage me to study [solutions] and come back with recommendations," said Jackson. "He was teaching me to solve problems, how to figure it out and make the right decisions."

Ruben's death at a relatively young age had a profound impact on Jackson, who made a point to be a strong mentor to those around him throughout his career.

"When Joe Ruben died, I realized how important mentorship really is," said Jackson. "I felt badly that I was not able to extract from him all he knew. I then tried to teach the people working for me what I knew."

Temples to Casinos: Creating a Firm Capable of Designing a Range of Diverse Projects

A glance at FFKR's portfolio from each of its five decades reveals a tantalizing mix of large, diverse, highly challenging projects, from special religious projects for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—the Brigham Young University Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies, the remodel of the Salt Lake Tabernacle, and a slew of majestic temples—to glitzy casinos including Talking Stick Resort in Scottsdale, Arizona, as well as Tachi Palace Casino Resort in Lemoore, California.

Those opposite ends of the spectrum projects are supplemented with significant projects in every major building market—institutional, civic, municipal, office, retail, K-12, higher education, healthcare, multifamily, and sports and recreation. It's an impressive mix, a veritable smorgasbord of high-level, top-shelf offerings. (see FFKR Top Projects list at the end of the article)

Being able to work on these types of projects is an strong perk when trying to attract prospective new architects to the firm, Jackson admits.

"We're fortunate to be able to work on some really amazing projects," he said. "I've had great opportunities to work on some wonderful buildings, as have many of our people. I've had a bunch of once-in-a-lifetime projects; some of the biggest we've ever done. It's a great opportunity for our firm to be involved in something grand. We've always done the best we could, and we put the best people we could find on these projects."

Perhaps Jackson's most impressive project all-time is serving as the Architect for the restoration of the Salt Lake Temple, a seven-year construction project that is slated to finish at the end of 2026.

"They set the tone and had high expectations for anyone who worked here. I have huge respect for Bob and Frank's design talent. Joe was just a good guy, very pleasant. Ray was intense, but a great mentor. I wouldn't be at the table if it wasn't for Ray. Somehow we all made it work."

— Jeff Fisher

"The Salt Lake Temple restoration is probably the biggest project the firm has ever done and perhaps the largest project the Church has ever undertaken," Jackson said. "When you work on temples, you can feel the significance of the work. The Church deliberately wants these buildings to be beautiful and built with noble materials—stone, marble and high-quality finishes. That's a tremendous privilege as an architect. It's certainly been the capstone of my career."

Fisher also concurred that the opportunity to work on iconic projects is special, as he helped design a bevy of generational projects, including the Delta Center from 1988-1991 and the University of Utah's Rice-Eccles Stadium expansion from 1996-1998.

On the Delta Center, Fisher teamed up with Ferguson, who had developed a relationship with Larry Miller on a remodel of the Salt Palace. They traveled around the country looking at NBA arenas for inspiration, then spent 16 months on the design-build project, which ultimately turned out fantastic. The success of the››

Marriott Courtyard and Residence Inn

BYU Jerusalem Center

Delta Center led to a host of work for Miller as he gradually built his expansive car dealership and entertainment empire.

"It was a big deal," Fisher said of designing the Delta Center. "I formed a close relationship with Larry as a result of that project. He asked me and Frank to design his house in Federal Heights. We ended up doing 64 projects for Larry." That included several auto dealerships, along with the Jordan Commons entertainment complex in Sandy, which included the unique Mayan Restaurant, a 10-story office building, and Larry H. Miller's first-ever Megaplex Theater.

Fisher said he enjoyed developing client relationships as much, if not more, than actually designing their projects. "That's been the greatest part of my career—the relationships and meeting interesting people," he noted.

Consistency in Maintaining Revenue Base a Priority for Current Leaders

Current President Mike Leishman, 54, joined FFKR in 2007, a year before the Great Recession hit, which was a challenging period for the then 31-year-old firm. "We weathered it fairly well," he recalled. "I was working with Jim Lewis on the BYU-Idaho Center, and we had Talking Stick Casino going. Those two projects pushed us through that period pretty well. We had to reinvent ourselves; had to go knock on some doors. We did a lot of commercial [tenant improvement] work."

Leishman said that period reinforced the importance of market diversity and maintaining irons in many fires.

"We're diverse enough in various market sectors—we seem to weather things pretty well," he said of market segment fluctuations. "That's still our philosophy. We're really all about our clients—it's been that way for a long time now."

Leishman represents the fourth major generation of leadership at the firm, having been mentored by Fisher, Jackson, and Lewis from the previous generation.

Fisher, who served for five years as Chief Financial Officer, tutored Leishman on the financial side of the business, as well as human resources, paving the way for him to serve as Treasurer under then President Kevin Mass in 2021, and then President in February 2024.

Of the firm's 170 employees, FFKR boasts a healthy mix of 22 Principals, 31 Senior Associates, and 40 Associates, with people progressing through the ranks as they prove their overall worth.

In the past 10-plus years, FFKR's revenues have more than doubled from $23 million in 2015 (tops among Utah-based architectural firms) to an average of over $45 million the past six years, with the biggest jump coming from 2018 to 2019 ($28.9 million to $40.3 million), and stout marks of $45.8 million in both 2020 and 2022. The firm ranked No. 1 in revenues in seven of the past 11 years and No. 2 the other four years, with a blistering, record-high $57.2 million in 2025.

Leishman is bullish on the firm's outlook both in the short term and looking ahead into the next decade.

"People can have a career and do what they want—that's where my focus is. Jeff, Roger, and the generation before set that precedent, and it's my job to keep FFKR going in that direction. My first goal is to find, mentor, and train the next generation of leaders."
— Mike Leishman

"I see a lot of opportunities for the people in the firm," he said. "I get excited for the advancement of people on my team and other teams. We're trying to position the company for a slew of future generations. People can have a career and do what they want—that's where my focus is. Jeff, Roger, and the generation before set that precedent, and it's my job to keep FFKR going in that direction. My first goal is to find, mentor, and train the next generation of leaders."


Hillcrest High School

Keeping a Vibrant Culture; Expansion to St. George In Line with Growth Strategy

Two others holding prominent roles among the current leadership team are: Christina Haas, the current Chair of the Board of Directors and a Principal since 2020, and Ben Rogers, 58, Principal and Manager of the St. George office, which acquired Rogers' and Principal Scott Gilberg's firm—Desert Edge Architecture—in January 2025, giving FFKR a robust Southern Utah presence with a dozen employees.

Haas joined the firm in 2010 and helps shepherd the firm's Healthcare Studio. She cites the firm's schedule flexibility and employee empowerment as key drivers to FFKR's long-term success.

"We have a fun environment, with personal growth and learning. I love that we do so many different types of architecture and have different things going on in the office. We really are a place that cares about people and every team member, and we make sure everybody is feeling happy so they're doing their best work."
— Christina Haas

"We treat people like adults," she said, noting that the office has kept its hybrid work policy since 2020. "We were already super mobile. There are some basic tenants how you manage people, but it has worked out well to have a hybrid work policy with people being able to balance work and life. We've learned a lot in six years and will continue to evolve. It's evolve or die—we're always learning, always getting better."

She says having a dynamic culture remains a top focus of the current leaders and believes it's one of the factors that separates the firm from the competition.

"We like to say, 'I love coming to work because I get to hang with my friends and do cool stuff.' We have a fun environment, with personal growth and learning," said Haas. "I love that we do so many different types of architecture and have different things going on in the office. We really are a place that cares about people and every team member, and we make sure everybody is feeling happy so they're doing their best work. When people feel like they enjoy what they do, it works with their personal life.

"We can do hard things and have fun doing it. We can work on hard projects in a collaborative effort—that's what drives us."

"We're only as good as our teams," added Leishman. "We want our employees to have opportunities and try hard to offer great benefits and salary. It's paid off—we have a lot of people who have been here a long time."

Rogers heads the St. George office, which is thriving utilizing the expanded resources and capabilities that happen naturally with a large firm.

"A couple of years after starting Desert Edge, we quickly became aware of our limitations in terms of project scale," said Rogers, noting the pursuit of a Hilton Curio hospitality project. "It became clear that we were simply too small to deliver that type of project on our own."

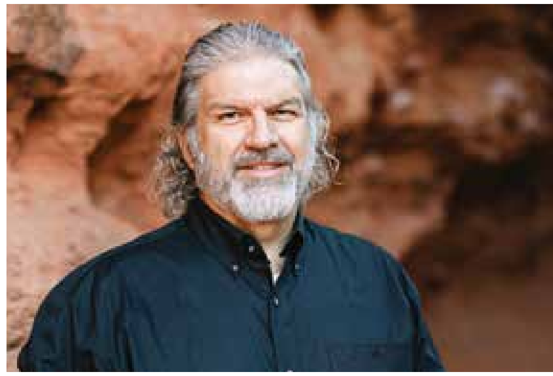
Rogers and Gilberg had been in conversation with FFKR about an acquisition, and at the beginning of 2025 the timing was right.

"FFKR was looking for geographic expansion, while we were looking for larger project opportunities," said Rogers. "Even during what we jokingly called the 'dating relationship', we could already see the benefits. We won projects together that neither firm likely would have secured alone."

Rogers added: "I've known Mike Leishman and [Principal and Treasurer] David Brenchley for 25 years, so there was already a strong level of trust there. As conversations progressed, it became obvious our philosophies about clients, employees, and practice management were very aligned. Now, if we land a major project, we have access to 160 people across the company who can help support the work."

Both Hass and Rogers say it's great being a part of a firm with 50 years of history.

"It's so cool to be part of this legacy," said Haas. "The foundational projects, like Abravanel Hall, Cliff Lodge; so many beautiful and iconic projects. [...] It's great to see how this firm has grown with the city, with Utah, and with our clients."



"FFKR has figured out how to manage growth, leadership succession, and client relationships. Repeat clients are the foundation of a successful practice. When you serve clients well and build lasting relationships, it gives you the stability to pursue meaningful projects and weather downturns in specific market sectors."
— Ben Rogers

"To me, FFKR reaching 50 years is significant because very few firms successfully transition from the first generation to the second and third generations of leadership," said Rogers. "FFKR has figured out how to manage growth, leadership succession, and client relationships. Repeat clients are the foundation of a successful practice. When you serve clients well and build lasting relationships, it gives you the stability to pursue meaningful projects and weather downturns in specific market sectors."

Jackson is confident the current leaders have the firm pointed in the right direction.

"We've been busy charging ahead all along," he said. "We always had the thought and intention of growing the company. That's our mindset." ■

FFKR Architects Significant Projects by Decade

Project	Location	Completion Date
1976–1986		
Abravanel Hall	Salt Lake City	1979
Northwest Pipeline Building	Salt Lake City	1981
UVU Student Center	Orem	1977
BYU N. Eldon Tanner Building	Provo	1983
American Express Building	West Valley City	1982
1987–1996		
BYU Jerusalem Center	East Jerusalem	1987
Snowbird Cliff Lodge Expansion	Little Cottonwood	1988
Eccles Institute of Human Genetics	Salt Lake City	1990
Delta Center	Salt Lake City	1991
Salt Lake Hardware Redevelopment	Salt Lake City	1996
1997–2006		
Vernal Utah Temple	Vernal	1997
East High School Renovation	Salt Lake City	1997
Rice-Eccles Stadium	Salt Lake City	1998
Jordan Commons	Sandy	2000
Utah State Capitol Expansion	Salt Lake City	2004
2007–2016		
Salt Lake Tabernacle Restoration	Salt Lake City	2007
Daybreak Corporate Center	South Jordan	2008
Talking Stick Resort	Scottsdale, AZ	2010
Provo City Center Temple	Provo	2016
Milagro Apartments	Salt Lake City	2018
2017–2026		
bioMérieux Diagnostics Campus	Salt Lake City	2017
University Hospital Expansion	Salt Lake City	2020
Hillcrest High School	Midvale	2021
Logan Fire Station	Logan	2025
Salt Lake Temple Restoration	Salt Lake	2026

COURTS-in-SESSION

At 120,000 SF and highlighted with nine full-size, regulation basketball courts under one expansive roof, the new Western Sports Park marks the largest building investment in Davis County history.

By Milt Harrison

Davis County officials have posited the spacious new Western Sports Park (WSP) in Farmington as far more than a sports complex. The $62.8 million project is being framed as a regional economic driver, tourism catalyst, and long-term community investment designed to attract major tournaments and events from across the Wasatch Front.

"This investment represents a new lane for economic and tourism for Davis County," said Kent Andersen, Director of Community and Economic Development for Davis County. "At [nearly] $70 million this is the largest project investment in Davis County's history."

Located on the former Legacy Events Center campus, the 120,000-SF indoor facility combines tournament-scale flexibility with upgraded outdoor amenities, expanded infrastructure, and a renewed civic identity. The project includes a massive new pre-engineered metal building connected directly to the renovated Legacy Events Center, creating a unified campus capable of hosting everything from youth basketball and volleyball tournaments to expos, graduations and community celebrations. ››

The $62.8 million Western Sports Park represents the most expensive project in history for owner Davis County. (all photos courtesy Layton Construction)

Designed by Salt Lake-based Method Studio and built by Sandy-based Layton Construction, the facility is a testament to the value of collaborative teamwork in producing a world-class sports and recreation venue.

"From day one, Davis County had a vision: by building WSP, they would create a destination and enhance economic development for the county," said Jeff Palmer, Executive Vice President of Layton Construction. "It was rewarding for the Layton team to collaborate with a fantastic architect and county officials to bring the WSP campus to life—one that attracts not only sports, but a wide range of events to this versatile and inviting venue."

Josh Green Quotes

The project's scale reflects the county's ambitions. Outdoor improvements include a new championship field with 1,000 bleacher seats, seven full-sized natural-grass fields and parking capacity for approximately 2,000 vehicles. A newly expanded retention pond manages stormwater across the site while also helping address challenging groundwater conditions discovered during construction.

> "From day one, Davis County had a vision: by building WSP, they would create a destination and enhance economic development for the county."
> — Jeff Palmer

Inside, the facility was designed around adaptability. One of the building's defining features is a three-section, 3,000-seat retractable bleacher system that allows the arena to shift configurations depending on event needs. With the bleachers deployed, the building can host six courts with a championship center court atmosphere. Retracted, the facility expands to nine playable courts.

Project teams said that flexibility became one of the driving design principles from the earliest planning meetings.

The design team worked closely with Davis County officials, facilities staff and the contractor to establish priorities around durability, operational efficiency and long-term value. Those discussions ultimately led to the decision to use a pre-engineered metal building system, allowing the project to achieve the large clear-span spaces required for tournament-level athletics while maintaining budget discipline.

Rather than allowing the building to become a generic metal shell, the architects layered in design strategies intended to elevate the structure into a recognizable civic destination. Carefully positioned glazing, rhythmic insulated metal panel systems and strategically framed mountain views help soften the scale of the building and visually connect it to nearby attractions such as Station Park and Lagoon.

Large expanses of glass also introduce natural light deep into the arena while reinforcing transparency throughout the facility. Office and conference spaces overlooking both the central lobby and arena floor allow operations staff to remain visually connected to ongoing events.

The dramatic mezzanine level creates another signature experience within the building, giving visitors elevated views into competitions below and helping energize the main concourse during large tournaments.

The project team emphasized that designing a high-capacity facility required careful study of circulation patterns for athletes, spectators, referees and equipment. Vehicular movement around the campus received equal attention. The site includes a circular drop-off system, updated traffic flow, improved pedestrian connections and flexible parking layouts capable of supporting both athletic tournaments and legacy weekend racing events still held on portions of the campus.

Coordination with the City of Farmington also resulted in a newly signalized intersection intended to improve long-term safety and traffic efficiency around the complex.

Site conditions created additional technical challenges. Minimal grade variation combined with a high-water table forced crews to implement subsurface mitigation strategies and expand the southern retention pond to improve long-term water management.

Material selections throughout the project balanced durability, maintenance and cost efficiency. Rubber sports flooring was installed in competition areas, while sealed concrete was used extensively in high-traffic support spaces. High-impact gypsum board protects the lower portions of exposed structural walls in athlete-heavy zones, helping guard both the building and occupants against damage.

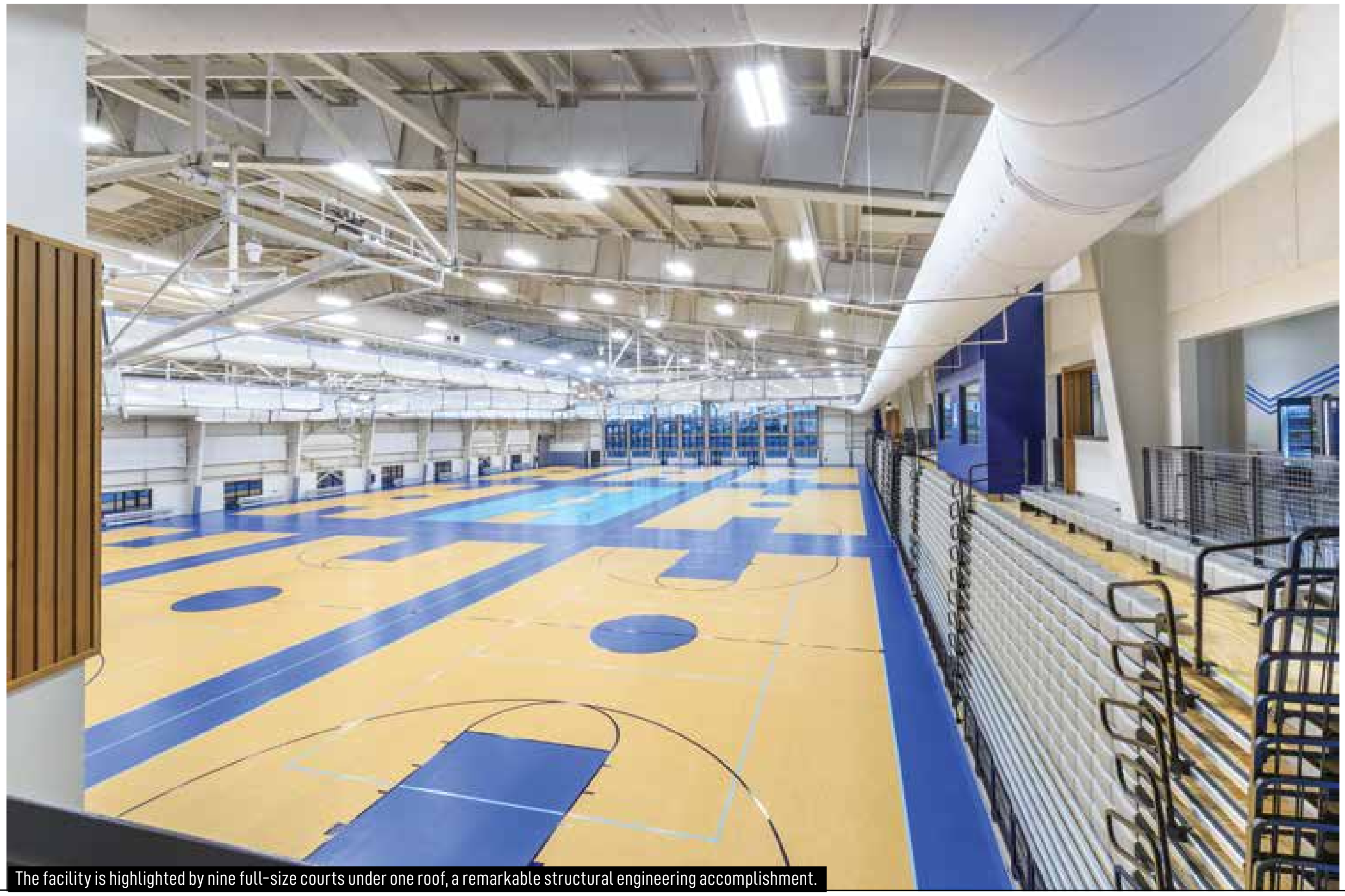
Warm wood accents were strategically introduced throughout the interior to soften the predominantly steel-and-metal environment and provide moments of warmth and human scale.

Attention to detail extended to the building envelope itself. The project team carefully aligned insulated metal panels, glazing systems and structural junctions to ensure the facility presented as a polished civic venue rather than a utilitarian warehouse.

The integration of nine retractable basketball hoop systems within the massive structure also required careful coordination among HVAC, lighting, AV and curtain systems suspended as high as 50 feet above the floor.

Project officials said the facility's visual identity was another important design consideration. Bold environmental graphics and wayfinding systems were integrated throughout the building to improve navigation during large events while reinforcing the facility's branding.

Interactive graphics featuring sports-related facts and educational elements were also incorporated to create a more ››



The facility is highlighted by nine full-size courts under one roof, a remarkable structural engineering accomplishment.

Interior spaces are open and airy, with copious amounts of natural daylighting.

engaging experience for younger visitors and families.

Additional support spaces—including team rooms, referee rooms, multipurpose gathering spaces, concession areas, and a convenience store—were designed to help the building accommodate multiple simultaneous events without creating operational bottlenecks.

The facility is envisioned as a long-term gathering place where youth sports can help strengthen community connections and create opportunities for local families.

Palmer concluded with an appropriate sports-related analogy on describing the overall project: "I'd say the team hit a home run." ■

Western Sports Park
Location: Farmington
Cost: $62.8 million
Square Footage: 120,000
Owner: Davis County
Owner's Rep: Lane Rose

Design Team
Architect: Method Studio
Civil: Civil Solutions Group
Electrical: Spectrum Engineers
Mechanical: Resolut
Structural: Reaveley Engineers
Geotechnical: GSH Geotechnical
Interior Design/Furniture: Method Studio
Landscape Architect: Civil Solutions Group

Construction Team
General Contractor: Layton Construction
Plumbing: Mechanical Service & Systems
HVAC: Mechanical Service & Systems
Electrical: Rydalch Electric
Concrete: Layton Construction
Steel Fabrication: Sure Steel
Steel Erection: Sure Steel
Glass/Curtain Wall: B&D Glass
Masonry: Allen's Masonry Company
Drywall/Acoustics: K&L Acoustics and Drywall
Painting: Western Partitions
Tile/Stone: DesignTeam
Flooring: DesignTeam
Roofing: Layton Roofing
Waterproofing: Lotz Construction
Excavation: Western Pipe Fabrication
Demolition: Eagle Environmental
Landscaping: Utah Complete

SHELTER *from the storm*

The new Boys & Girls Club of Northern Utah Community Campus offers a true safe haven for families and individuals suffering from challenging domestic situations.

By Bradley Fullmer

The new Boys & Girls Club of Northern Utah Campus in Brigham City. (photos by Jared Kenitzer; courtesy Eckman Construction)

For Cole Freeman, helping build the new $6.9 million Boys & Girls Club of Northern Utah Community Campus in Brigham City was far more than just another construction project.

Growing up in Carson City, Nevada, Freeman experienced difficult domestic conditions from age 9 to 11, and found himself spending significant time at the local Boys & Girls Club in his hometown, which offered a respite from some of the challenges he faced at home at the time.

"It was a place that I could get a meal; a place that I could go and be safe from a lot of stuff that was happening at home," said Freeman, 33, who serves as Construction Manager for Salt Lake-based Eckman Construction. "It was a great project to work on."

Working on the Boys & Girls Club of Northern Utah was indeed a rewarding endeavor, a project that is designed to provide resources and a sense of security for people who use it, similar to the club that helped shape his own upbringing. The newly completed multi-building campus combines facilities for the Boys & Girls Club of Northern Utah, the New Hope Crisis Center and the D.L. Evans Bank Event Center into a centralized hub for youth programs, crisis services, childcare and community support.

Eckman built the 11,500-SF Community Center, and the 13,700-SF New Hope Crisis Center, completing the projects early this year after a 15-month construction schedule.

The campus officially opened in March, with a ribbon-cutting ceremony that was attended by state and federal lawmakers, nonprofit leaders, contractors, and residents from Box Elder County.

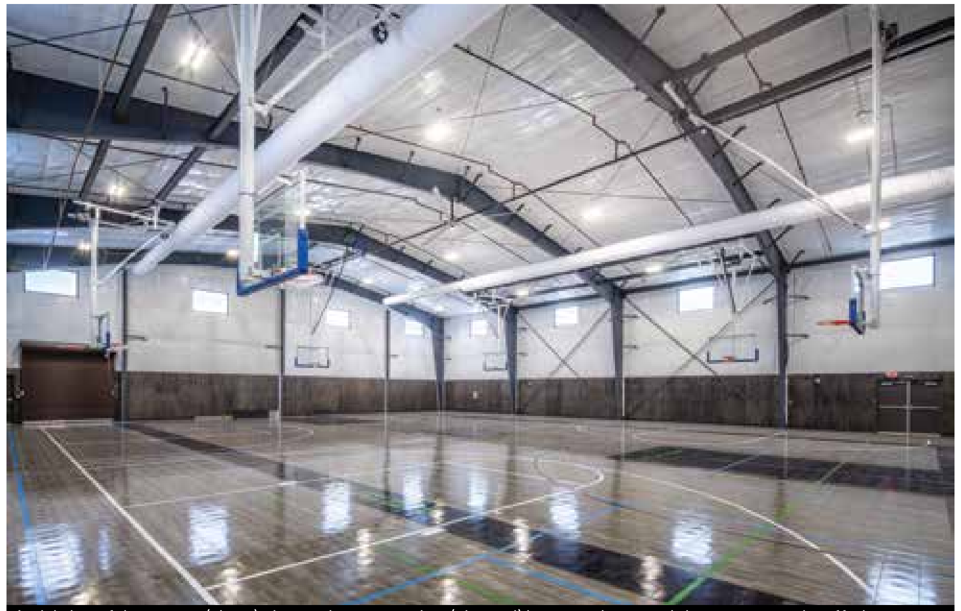
For Freeman, the project carried emotional significance beyond schedules and construction milestones.

"One of their core values is that kids are fed," Freeman said of the Boys & Girls Club organization. "That was something that I didn't really have a lot of growing up—sustainable access to food. Coming from a pretty low-income family, it was a good opportunity to have that (security) but also have a space where I could interact with›› people and feel safe [...] where I could play and just be a kid."

The development was designed as a collaborative "one-stop shop" model that places multiple services in a single location, helping reduce barriers for families seeking assistance. In addition to youth recreation and educational programming, the campus will provide infant and toddler care, preschool services, community gathering space, case management and shelter resources for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault.

The Community Center is a pre-engineered metal building with a large interior space that doubles as a regulation-sized basketball court that can be broken into two smaller courts with six basketball standards. Amenities include a kitchen, restroom facilities and storage rooms to facilitate a wide variety of events and activities.

The New Hope Crisis Center is a secure 24-7 facility that includes 12 residential units that can be subdivided to support up to 30 people. On-site resources such as job training, court advocacy, sexual assault support services, and domestic violence support services are inclusive. On-site amenities include full-service dual kitchens with some in-unit kitchenettes, independent temperature control in each unit, secure play areas, and laundry services.



Aerial view of the campus (above); the spacious gymnasium (pictured) is among the center's important amenity offerings.

JeuneElle Jeffries, CEO of the Boys & Girls Club of Northern Utah, said the project emerged from years of collaboration between nonprofits, local businesses, elected officials, and private donors.

"Businesses in Box Elder County stepped up and said social services affect my business; social services affect my employees," she said. "This is good for my employees. This is good for my neighborhood."

Funding for the project included local and private contributions alongside federal rural development assistance through the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"We braided a lot of different funding for this," Jeffries said. "We [utilized] money from the USDA that had never been done before, and they figured out how to do it with us."

Freeman said the Boys & Girls Club facility was envisioned as more than just an after-school building. The project was designed to function as a long-term community anchor.

"The community center is going to be utilized by the Boys & Girls Club for the most part but also have it serve as a community hub for the surrounding area," Freeman said. "They'll have sports, large events, fundraising opportunities, and things like that. It will definitely be a great way for the Boys & Girls Club to continue to grow and facilitate resources for the community."

Freeman praised Jeffries for relentlessly pushing the project forward.

"She fights tooth and nail for the funds for her facility," he added.

While the Boys & Girls Club component resonated with Freeman's own childhood experiences, the New Hope Crisis Center portion of the campus carried an even more personal connection. Freeman said his mother once relied on domestic violence shelters while raising him and his siblings.»

"That one is definitely near and dear to me," he said. "Growing up being in and out of those types of facilities, it was very sterile, and you almost felt like it was another treatment center." He said the design team from Ogden-based Mountain West Architecture intentionally worked to create a more welcoming environment. "This new facility is much more inviting—the design team did a great job."

The expanded New Hope Crisis Center facility will significantly increase the organization's ability to provide shelter and support services.

"The new building will double our capacity," said Anneli Robert, a Victim Assault Advocate for New Hope. "We're trying to make sure that we can help more people when it comes to having somewhere to stay within our program and helping (victims) get back on their feet. We're trying to make it like a one-stop shop for services, just for the whole county."

Freeman said one of the most meaningful aspects of the project is that families will now be able to remain together while receiving services—something many older shelters did not allow.

"Growing up, those shelters were only for the women that were affected, not necessarily for the families," Freeman said. "There were times where we were sitting outside while [our mother] was inside getting services. This facility will allow families to come in together and partake in the facilities together. So, super cool." ■

Boys & Girls Club of Northern Utah—Community Center and New Hope Crisis Center

Location: Brigham City
Start/Completion: September 2024/January 2026
Cost: $6.9 million
Delivery Method: Design-Bid-Build
Square Footage: Community Center - 11,476; New Hope Crisis Center - 13,700
Owner: Boys & Girls Club of Northern Utah
Owner's Rep: JeuneElle Jeffries

Design Team
Architect: Mountain West Architecture
Civil Engineer: Gardner Engineering
Electrical Engineer: Payne Engineering
Mechanical Engineer: Engineering Systems & Associates
Structural Engineer: ARW Engineers
Interior Design: Mountain West Architecture
Landscape Architect: Gardner Engineering

Construction Team
GC: Eckman Construction
Concrete: Evans Concrete Construction
Plumbing: Legacy Plumbing
HVAC: Precision Comfort Solutions, Up North
Electrical: The Electric Guys
Masonry: 360 Construction
Drywall: Lara & Sons Construction
Painting: Non-Typical Painting
Tile/Stone: Premier Floor Company, 360 Construction
Millwork: Clients Design
Flooring: Premier Floor Company
Roofing: d-7 Roofing, Ellis Builders
Glazing/Curtain Wall: Midwest D-Vision Solutions
Waterproofing: Hansen/All Seasons Insulation
Steel Fabrication & Erection: Steelworks Fabrication
Excavation: Blue Rock Enterprises
Pre-engineered Metal Building & Erection: Ellis Builders
Landscaping: JC Landscaping
Demolition: Blue Rock Enterprises

Mind the GAP

North Temple is changing, and A/E/C teams helping to usher in this transformation are creating noteworthy projects that are setting up an underserved area for a bright future.

By Taylor Larsen

North Temple has always had a history.

Some of it is seedy, like the quantity of rent-by-the-hour motels—a byproduct of drug epidemics, homelessness, and trafficking within a city that has indulged a little too much in "Utah nice" instead of creating partnerships to change it.

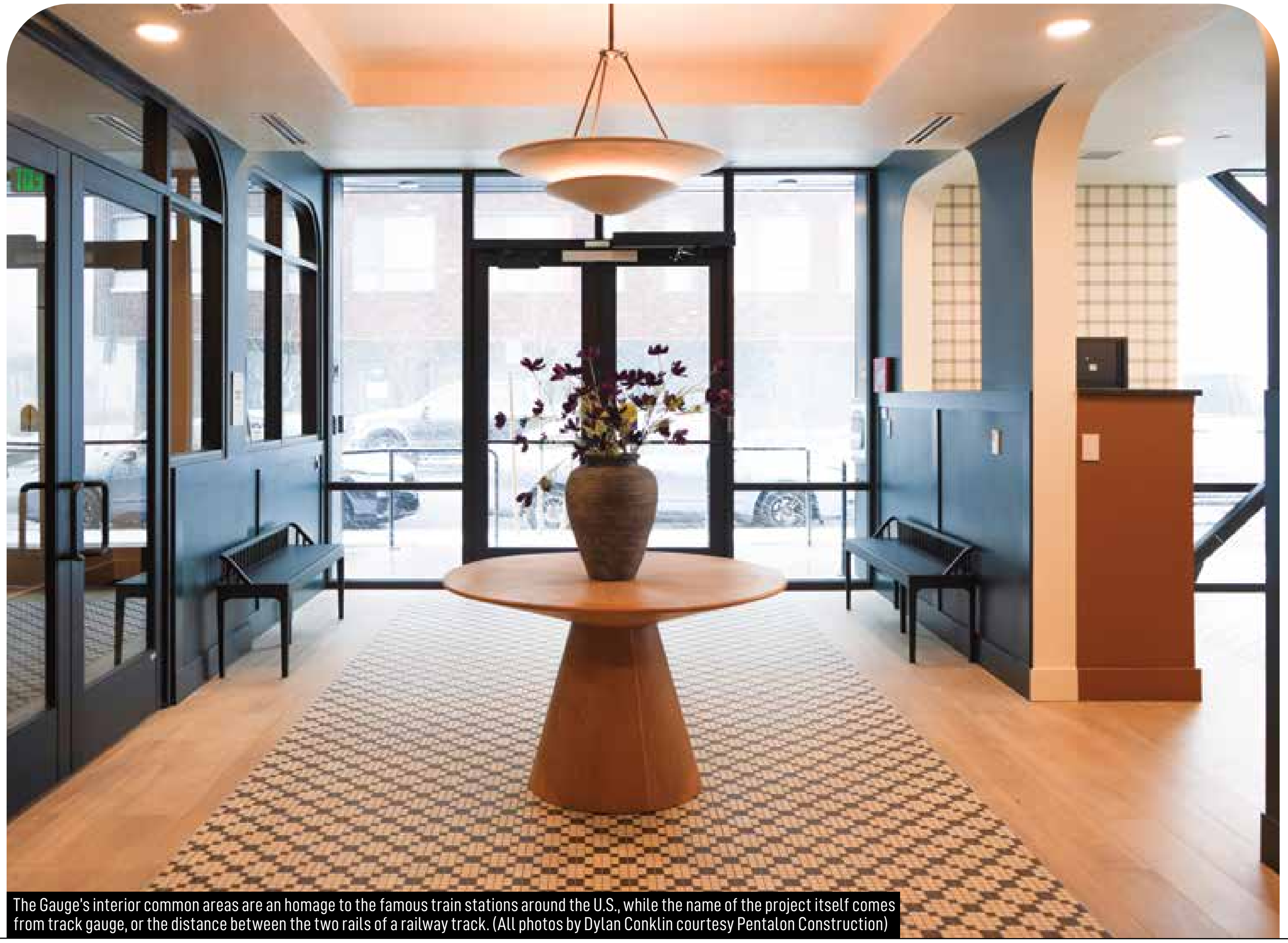
But there is plenty of good and emerging history. Red Iguana continues to be the first place mentioned when someone asks about Salt Lake's Mexican food scene, even if Los Tapatios a tad further east deserves a shout. The Fairpark continues events like the Utah Days of '47 Rodeo and Utah State Fair that bring in San Juan County cowboys, Tooele Valley farmers, and a lot of suburbanite cosplayers. Those same folks, or their counterparts across state and national lines, have come by the thousands to enjoy the Kilby Block Party music festival held there at the beginning of May over the last three years.

My bike ride through the area was revealing. The 7-Eleven on North Temple and Redwood is no longer dystopian, and many of the rent-by-the-hour motels are long gone, replaced with much-needed housing projects. Proximity to downtown Salt Lake may never change, but development over two decades has brought the area closer in density and desirability.

It's in this conversation we tour one of the most recent North Temple projects, The Gauge, a name inspired by track gauge, or the distance between each side of a railway track. The six-acre site has taken quite the journey from its previous 50-plus years as the log cabin-style Diamond Lil's steakhouse. Did the new project take the nearby TRAX line to Kansas City for inspiration from its historic and famous Union Station? In a roundabout way, yes, say Eric Balls and Tonya Timothy, who led the design and construction efforts on The Gauge.

The two just wish that journey had fewer stops and backtracks. But they and their fellow project teammates and trade partners motored forward to deliver the project on-time and on-budget.

Design on The Gauge began before the pandemic—one of the last projects that Architecture Belgique did before utilizing 3D modeling, said Balls, Sr. Associate & Project Manager. But less complex software didn't mean a softer outlook from city officials on code enforcement for maximum building façade length. The original design that consisted of two larger building masses››



The Gauge's interior common areas are an homage to the famous train stations around the U.S., while the name of the project itself comes from track gauge, or the distance between the two rails of a railway track. (All photos by Dylan Conklin courtesy Pentalon Construction) surrounded by smaller ones—all within one continuous building—would need changing.

Design shifted to create two separate buildings that incorporated skybridge walkways and revamped circulation and egress stairs.

Long before construction reached the skybridges, Timothy said she and the field team, led by Pentalon Superintendent Mike Pollard, would need to do some digging. The construction team expected to find the three wells listed in Utah's Division of Water Rights Well Logs, capping and abandoning them prior to excavation. More digging uncovered the start of the site's undocumented history—World War II-era homes that Timothy said were seemingly demolished and covered to make way for new development.

Those weren't the only buried treasures, as excavators hit wells that never made it into the logs. As dewatering began, Timothy detailed how the nearby canal and high groundwater had seemingly worked in tandem to frustrate future construction by morphing the subsurface, leaving voids and garbage piles over the years as they meandered along uncharted paths. The previously balanced site required an extensive earthwork package that turned the site into a port exporting contaminated soils and importing structural fill.

With site conditions seemingly as fluid as the groundwater below, on-site electricity delivered another challenge. Old transformers from Diamond Lil's needed removing, while transformers and cabinets powering the nearby TRAX station, The Gauge, and SPARK Apartments across Cornell Street needed relocating—made more difficult as the two multifamily projects were under construction simultaneously.

The project team ensured these challenges wouldn't lead to dead ends. Balls said design returned to the drawing board, relocating an entire unit stack to the northwest corner of the property to make room at grade for relocated electrical equipment.

The Pentalon team followed suit, with Timothy praising Pollard as "the backbone of the project." He worked closely with the entire team to keep the project aligned, schedules on track, and ensure The Gauge was built to the highest standards. Construction was resequenced to start with north building, made difficult because all of the main feeds—water, fire sprinkler, power, and fiber—came into the south building.

Detours and all, the project team delivered the north building four months ahead of schedule; construction finished on the south building a few weeks before the contract date; and Balls said the reconfigured unit mix contained the originally planned 296 unit count—all with the same design intent.

Spatial efficiency is a welcome design attribute throughout The Gauge, particularly in the commons (top left), two-story gym (pictured), courtyard and pool (bottom left), and even in the massing of the building itself (bottom right).

"Through coordination and great partnerships with the design team, GC, and trade partners, we were successful," said Timothy.

Amidst the challenges, the final product created a feeling of wonder that comes from arrival at a final destination—home.

Stepping into the lobby is akin to stepping into a historic train station. Checkerboard tile floors, transom archways, and other features from interior designers at ESG Architecture & Design set a charming ambiance. Just steps away, the mailroom continues the theme, with storefront glazing combining with the wood tones of the mailbox frames to provide tactile warmth.

Collaborative efforts amidst the challenges delivered beauty and operational excellence throughout and especially in these ground floor common areas. The design incorporated seven moment frames to work within the non-stackable common area that made for a competition for space for MEP systems, and Timothy noted how interior construction succeeded in hiding steel beams and columns for a luxurious clubroom.

One of those columns required a re-think of the space's fireplace feature. Instead of the flush original design, the fireplace insets into the mantle, wrapped in hand-glazed, kiln-fired "Bison Brick" tiles for an elevated feature that matches the regal nature of the room's custom cabinetry, artwork, billiards table, and more.

Stepping into the outdoor courtyard, one quickly forgets the North Temple traffic on the other side of the building. The apartment wrap acts as a privacy screen, giving a quiet serenity for those relaxing by the pool.

But something is different about this pool—it is visually clear of railings.

"The building itself becomes the security perimeter," Balls said. The intentional choice to leave out patios and other instant-access features helped to deliver a more open and inviting outdoor commons. With plenty of landscaping, cabanas, a sitting lounge with TV and fireplace, and more, the courtyard is a ready-made oasis.

As we journeyed up the elevator, Timothy and Balls detailed many elevated features within the residences—beefier headers and baseboards; windows ranging from 6' x 6' at their smallest and floor-to-ceiling at their tallest; two-inch-thick quartz countertops; and plenty of built-in storage.

"This is probably one of the most efficient buildings we've done in quite a while," said Balls. "There is not one bit of unused space in the building."

> "I love our covered porches on the street-facing façade of the north building; you don't often see this with apartments."
> **— Eric Balls**

Easier in design than constructability, Timothy laughed, saying, "It made it tight for us, and we were using every nook and cranny to build." Even with the complexity, she noted how the project delivers a degree of longevity by creating such efficient, lovely, and livable units for 296 households to enjoy.

Even through two redesigns, Balls said architects looked to "mind the gap" and envision how the project would fit in the area as it developed further. As part of the city's desire for a gateway of sorts from the airport, design would incorporate durable materials on street-facing façades for a visually accessible and eye-catching architecture.

"To create a more human scale, we wanted to develop an approach that makes it look like a new building was built around smaller, existing buildings," Balls said

Design called for a historic-feeling gray-brick warehouse, with generous use of thin brick and custom cast stone as its main cladding. Glazing—especially prominent in gorgeous curtain wall that extends to the top floor in the southwest and southeast corners—and more modern architectural elements and materials then surround the larger massing, where the expanded materiality and varied massing create the desired impression of smaller buildings in two key ways. Box frame windows, with heads and sills built utilizing a combination of New Cast Stone, soldier course brick, or Hardie board trim, act as role players that further define the varied deck sizes as designers shuffled units to create smaller massings by grouping unit types together.

"Our warehouse-style brick buildings are created by grouping lots of studio units together," said Balls. The absence of outdoor decks in the studio units benefited the design by turning that grouping into its own identifiable mass, one of many examples that he and Timothy mentioned that give each façade its own character and style. Better yet, Balls said, is a more elevated, townhome-type feature that helped to "dress up" the façade along Cornell Street. "I love our covered porches on the street-facing façade of the north building; you don't often see this with apartments."

Balls praised Timothy, Pollard, and the Pentalon team for engaging trade partners in solutions-first construction, saying, "I don't think I ever received and RFI with the statement "Please Advise" throughout the entire course of construction."

Timothy recounted how, as construction was wrapping up, she walked across North Temple to admire the building and finished details on advice she received years before: take a step back during construction and view the project from different perspectives.

She snapped some photos and sent them over to Balls with a side-by-side comparison to the early renderings. "The building looked exactly like the original renderings," she said.

Delivering The Gauge took years—changing history takes time, after all. The track gauge between delivered projects and fulfilling the city's design intent for North Temple continues to narrow, connecting a neighborhood renaissance with an ever-evolving Salt Lake.»

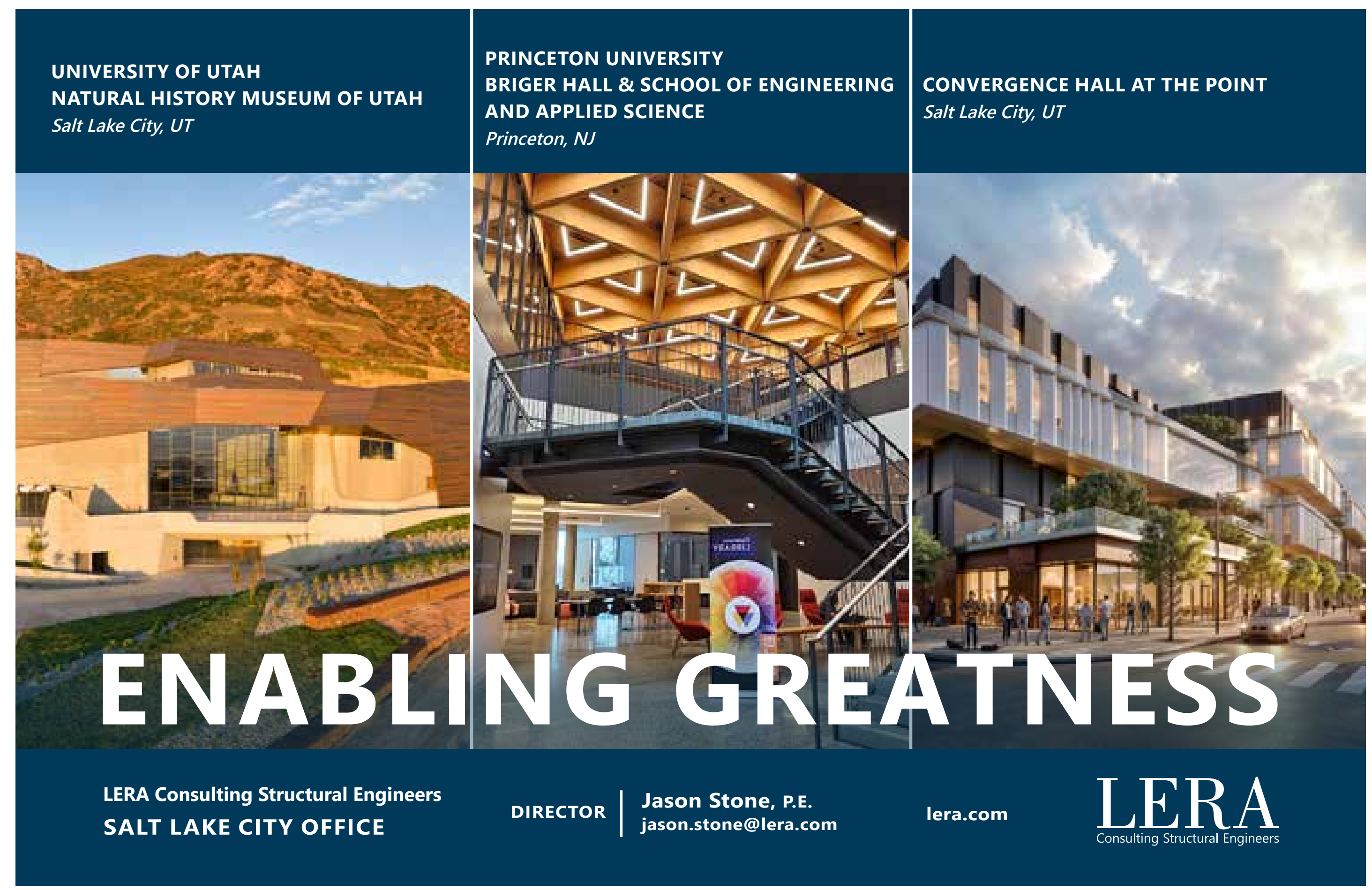
The Gauge

Location: 111 N Cornell St, Salt Lake City
Cost: $65 million
Delivery Method: CM/GC
Size: 371,288 SF across five stories

Project Team
Owner: Forum Investment Group, Henderson Development
Developer: Forum Investment Group

Design Team
Architect: Architecture Belgique
Civil: Galloway & Company
Electrical: Royal Engineering
Mechanical: Royal Engineering
Structural: Canyons Structural
Landscape: STB Design
Interior Design: ESG Architecture & Design

Construction Team
General Contractor: Pentalon Construction
Concrete: Pikus
Plumbing: Sharp Water Solutions
HVAC: Mechanical Design & Service
Electrical: Wimmer Electric
Masonry: E-Green Exteriors
Drywall/Acoustics: K&K Drywall
Painting: K&K Drywall
Tile/Stone: Wasatch Front Floor Coverings
Flooring: Wasatch Front Floor Coverings
Roofing: Scott Roofing
Glass/Curtain Wall: USI All Purpose Windows & Doors
Waterproofing: Guaranteed Waterproofing & Construction
Steel Fabrication: SN Steel
Excavation: Thurgood Excavating
Landscaping: Sinc Constructors



KIER Construction Celebrates 40 Years

Ogden-based firm has established itself as a respected general contractor across numerous vertical markets along with being one of the premier multifamily builders in Utah the past 15 years.

By Bradley Fullmer

For four decades, Ogden-based KIER Construction has established itself as one of the most recognizable names in Utah's A/E/C industry. What began in 1986 as a small, family-rooted general contractor has grown into one of the premier multifamily housing builders in the Intermountain West, backed by a deep and diverse resume of commercial projects spanning numerous vertical markets.

Founded by brothers Steve and Scott Kier, the company marks its 40th anniversary in 2026 with a $200 million bonding line, a team of more than 80 professionals, and a portfolio of more than 2,000 completed projects across nine Western states.

Steve and Scott led KIER Construction for 36 years before stepping back from day-to-day operations and retiring in 2022. Long before that, they had begun preparing the next generation of leadership, spending over a decade grooming that transition and retired with full confidence in the team they left in charge: Clint Costley took the reins as President in 2018, and Andrew Smith assumed the role as Vice President of Operations in 2019.

"These guys know what they're doing—they're doing a great job," said Steve, who served as President from the company's founding before later becoming CEO. "We can't run that fast anymore—we might get run over."

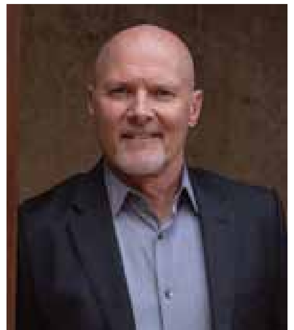
"No need to get in their way," added Scott.

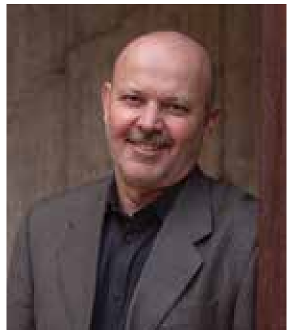
Humble Beginnings:
A Company Reborn in '86

KIER Construction traces its roots to the first generation of Kiers, Canada natives Jim and Norma, who moved their family from Toronto to Ogden in 1956. Jim founded the original Kier Construction in 1961, building homes across Northern Utah. He incorporated the business as Kier Corporation in 1972, shifting his focus to developing multifamily projects—primarily affordable housing through the››


Jim Kier teaches a young Steve from atop a bulldozer in the 1960s.


Jim and Norma Kier


Steve Kier


Scott Kier


Clint Costley


Andrew Smith


The Residences at Sugar Alley, in the heart of Salt Lake's Sugar House neighborhood, is a defining multifamily project in the firm's history. (all photos courtesy KIER)


Hardware Village

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

By the late 1970s, both Steve and Scott had joined their father, quickly developing a love for the fast-paced contract construction industry.

"When we came into the picture, having grown up in that atmosphere—we just loved construction," said Steve. "Dad pretty much gave us our wings to go out and pursue contract work, which he never really did. He was a developer that did his own construction. So, Scott and I started bringing in more and more work under his umbrella."

By 1985, Jim's bonding company had grown concerned that the brothers' contract work and Jim's speculative development projects were operating under one roof. The solution was a clean separation, and on June 30, 1986, KIER Construction was reborn as its own company—led by Steve and Scott, then just 27 and 25, respectively.

"He turned it over to us and gave us the option of naming it," said Steve. "We decided to take advantage of the brand that had already been created and stick with KIER Construction."

"Dad setting us up in construction also freed him up to just focus on development, because that was his love," said Scott.

To get started, Jim loaned his sons $300,000 at 10% interest—incentive enough to work hard and pay off the debt, which they did in year two. Jim's development work accounted for roughly half of the company's revenues in those early years, with the balance won through competitive bidding and sheer hustle. He also proved a tougher client than any outside owner, a trial that paid dividends.

"He put us through the gauntlet," Steve chuckled. "He gave us some very simple, but effective and meaningful pieces of advice that really became our core values."

"We learned a lot from being treated roughly, because that made us who we are—as far as facing issues and problems within our own business," said Scott.

The late 1980s were notoriously difficult for contractors, but Jim's steady development work carried his sons through margins that were often razor-thin elsewhere.

"It was dog eat dog back then, with as many as 10 bidders on every project. A lot of projects we acquired just because people liked us," said Steve. "We practiced fair play and were fun to work with. We didn't necessarily have to be low bid, just in the competitive area."

Though Jim passed away in 2005, the business philosophies he instilled in his sons still guide the company today.

Steady Growth Through the 1990s and 2000s

KIER Construction soldiered on through the 1990s and into the 2000s, with revenues reaching the mid-$30 million range late in the decade before gradually climbing to $60 million by the time the recession hit in 2007–08.

One standout from this era was the four-story, 41,000-SF Goldenwest Credit Union Operations Building in South Ogden, completed in 2000. The building remains a community landmark, renowned for its golden glass exterior and spacious three-story lobby.


Goldenwest Credit Union Operations Building

The company also built lasting relationships with repeat clients, including defense manufacturer ATK—which acquired Hercules Aerospace in 1995 and Thiokol in 2001—leading to more than a decade of industrial projects at its Promontory site. In 1996, KIER began building timeshare resorts for Trendwest Resorts (later WorldMark by Wyndham), a profitable line of work that continued for more than a decade.

The firm hired Clint Costley in 1998 to assist Scott with estimating and eventually Steve with business development.

When the Great Recession arrived, KIER weathered it by consciously focusing on municipal, religious, and non-profit housing developments, work that kept the doors open through a difficult three-year stretch. The firm's reputation for quality, combined with Steve and Scott's amiable approach, made it a go-to contractor.

"We were able to acquire projects because of our brand," said Steve. "[Owners] wanted our services over the next guy. When the Great Recession started to fade, all the pent-up demand for multifamily appeared and developers were knocking at our front door. "

Riding the Multifamily Wave

While revenues had been cut in half during the recession, Utah bounced back faster than most states, and KIER Construction's fortunes turned sharply for the better as the multifamily market ramped up. After leaving in 2006, Costley rejoined the company in 2012, and it didn't take long for KIER to establish itself as a major player in the booming multifamily market.

"Utah's had a huge uninterrupted in-migration since 2011," said Costley. "Urban infill became a thing in the late 2010s, and we've ridden that wave now for the last 15 years. By project count, it's closer to equal between multifamily and other commercial work—we just have bigger multifamily jobs than we do commercial jobs."

Multifamily housing can be lucrative, executives said, but it carries outsized risk when mistakes are made. "When you're building multifamily, if you miss one component, you miss it 50 times or 100 times, or however many units there are," said Scott.

"There's inherently a lot more risk in multifamily than in other verticals," added Costley. "The size and complexity of these projects today is extremely different than what would normally be viewed as an apartment in the old days of garden-style walk-ups. We do seven- and eight-story structures that have super complex systems, on zero lot line sites."


Dixon Place

Smith has helped refine that complex multifamily playbook since joining KIER in 2013—turning hard-won lessons into repeatable systems.

"Multifamily at this scale comes down to execution and sequencing—the difference between a good project and a great one is how well your team and your subcontractors perform, day in and day out," said Smith. "We've spent years building the processes that let us deliver that consistency, and that's what allows us to take on the most complex projects in the market."

The firm's growing expertise showed in projects like the 330-unit, 410,000-SF Park at City Center in Sandy, completed in 2015. The high-end, market-rate complex features resort-style amenities and a six-level parking garage.

Sugar Alley: A Defining Moment

Perhaps the most prominent multifamily project in the firm's history is also one of the most dramatic building stories in Utah.

In the early morning hours of October 26, 2022, a massive four-alarm fire, the single largest blaze in Salt Lake City's history—destroyed the eight-story, 193-unit Sugar Alley apartment complex, a $61.7 million project that was more than 80% complete. Devastating as it was, the fire became a defining moment in the company's leadership transition.

"The night of the fire is probably the best example of KIER's leadership transition," said Costley. "Steve and I got to the scene at relatively the same time. Salt Lake City's fire chief was there and asked Steve, 'Are you in charge?' And Steve said [pointing to me], 'He's in charge.' At that moment, standing on a Sugar House street corner and watching our project burning to the ground, I felt the weight of the company on my shoulders and wondered if I was ready for the magnitude of what was to come. Fortunately, Steve and Scott allowed us a ton of grace in navigating leadership lessons on our own."

After a months-long investigation, the 210,000-SF project resumed and was completed in April 2025, earning awards and recognition as one of the most striking multifamily projects in Salt Lake's vaunted Sugar House neighborhood.

The Kiers' confidence in Costley runs deep. Steve recalled a conversation from 2006, shortly before Costley left to work for a rival firm: "I asked him, 'Where do you see yourself in 20 years?' And his response was, 'I want your job'. The funny thing is, it pissed me off at the time. But when we started our succession planning, he was the first person I thought of."››


First Step House Campus

Granary Campus

Built to Last: A Diversified Future

Forty years in, KIER Construction's track record tells the story of a contractor that has always been diversified. Post-recession, revenues more than doubled from $58 million in 2012 to $128 million in 2016—the firm's first year eclipsing the $100 million mark—followed by $134 million in 2017. After dipping to $113 million in 2020, the past five years have been consistently strong, ranging from $137 million to a 2024 peak of $192 million, with $154.6 million in 2025 and designs on exceeding $200 million in 2026.

While multifamily remains a cornerstone, the firm continues to deliver across a wide range of markets—municipal, institutional, industrial, hospitality, healthcare, financial, and retail. Recent commercial highlights include numerous projects for Weber State University, the Ogden-Hinckley Airport terminal expansion, and ongoing public safety work such as fire stations. The firm also recently commenced its first project for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, a stake center in Etna, Wyoming.

Ogden-Hinkley Airport

In addition to Costley and Smith, a third generation of Kier family members have roles at the company. Scott's sons, Jason and Carson, are Project Superintendents, while Steve's son, Jaxon, is a Project Engineer Intern.

Costley and Smith are optimistic about where the firm is headed—confident in continuing to excel in multifamily while expanding its commercial footprint, all as KIER sets its sights on another revenue benchmark and its next 40 years.

"We've always been a diversified builder—that's part of what's made us durable for 40 years," said Costley. "Multifamily has been a huge part of our growth, but we've never stopped building the commercial, municipal, and institutional work that's in our DNA. Projects like Weber State, the Ogden airport, and our public-safety facilities show the breadth of what this team can do, and that diversity is exactly what positions us for a strong, sustainable future." ■

KIER Construction Top Projects

Project	Location	Completion Date
Goldenwest Credit Union Operations Building	South Ogden	2000
Park at City Center	Sandy	2017
Rockpoint Apartments	Bluffdale	2019
Hardware Village	Salt Lake City	2020
First Step House Campus	Salt Lake City	2016-20 (Phased)
Granary Campus/Evo Hotel	Salt Lake City	2022
NOVEL Daybreak	South Jordan	2024
The Residences at Sugar Alley	Salt Lake City	2025
Ogden-Hinkley Airport	Ogden	2025
Dee Events Center	Ogden	2026
MEP Upgrade		

NOVEL Daybreak

The New Level of Multifamily Fashionable

While the name MILLHAUS doesn't convey the full materiality of this recent multifamily build in Millcreek, the project demonstrates the step-by-step intentionality required to create and execute high design for a timeless project.

By Taylor Larsen

The brick cladding honors the neighborhood history of what was once called "The Brickyard"; black metal features further complement MILLHAUS's refined and timeless exterior. (image courtesy AO)

Rome wasn't built in a day, but it sure feels like downtown Millcreek underwent an overnight transformation.

The party started with Millcreek City's 2019 Master Plan, with Millcreek Common bringing the fun to the emerging downtown when it opened its splash pad, skating rink, park, and retail plaza in 2022; new apartment buildings, a new city hall, and beautiful street improvements joined in throughout the master planned area.

MILLHAUS, designed by AO and built by RVC Construction, appeared "fashionably late" to the city's ongoing development party when it completed in November 2025. But "fashionable" is the wrong word to describe this multifamily project—this one is anything but trendy. Its arrival in Millcreek is most welcome for just how timeless and unique it appears inside and out, creating a standout apartment building that architecturally elevates the growing community.

Designed for Community Connection

Ionna Magiati, Architect and Partner for California-based AO, said her team was focused on creating a community that anchors Millcreek's new and emerging downtown while fostering connection, walkability, and identity.

Millcreek may be a "new" city since incorporating in December 2016, but one with plenty of history. Magiati said AO's design draws from both the regional vision for Millcreek and the industrial identity of the neighborhood. She explained how, as Millcreek looked to establish a central, downtown area for residents to gather and celebrate community, officials created the Millcreek City Center Master Plan. Boyer Company sought to develop MILLHAUS and position it as the northern end of the reimagined Millcreek Common..

"There's a strong alignment between municipalities and the development community around creating vibrant, livable, and forward-thinking environments," said Magiati of Utah, and especially Millcreek, "and that shared commitment has been key to the success of projects like MILLHAUS."

Brick by Brick

According to her, designers embraced a modern industrial architectural language››

As a project transforming downtown Millcreek (visible in the middle of left image), designers prioritized engagement with nearby Millcreek Common via the outdoor amenity deck that overlooks the area (right). (left image courtesy RVC Construction; right image courtesy AO)

Residential interiors (top images on pg. 95; right) received an equal amount of intentionality as the exterior, where layouts across the multifamily residences were designed with high-quality fixtures and finishes for a welcome home. Common areas like the coworking space (left) deliver an industrial theme warmed by furniture and finishes for cozy community spaces. (pg. 95 images, right image courtesy RVC Construction; left image courtesy AO)

for a timeless and durable project—clean lines, metal, and thin-brick veneer that dominates the façade.

The latter is grounding, timeless, and supremely residential; a welcome material choice when so many other contemporary projects have skewed toward trendy.

But here, brick cladding is a lovely homage to neighborhood history that began, according to records from the National Society of the Sons of Utah Pioneers, with English immigrant Edward Potter Hemsley. He settled in Utah in the 1860s and later purchased a tract of land near Mill Creek he called “The Brickyard” for its close proximity to large clay deposits that he and his brother Job used to manufacture bricks for residential, commercial, and religious construction.

The area lived up to the name, and brick magnate John P. Cahoon purchased the land from Hemsley to move his Salt Lake Pressed Brick Co. there in 1891. The company built the iconic Smith Kiln Chimney 1902 and pumped out 60,000 bricks per day at its peak as Interstate Brick Co. before moving operations to West Jordan in 1972.

Today, the Smith Kiln Chimney still stands just two blocks directly west of MILLHAUS, and the historic brickwork that helped define the area now clads the building. Combined with the fiber cement siding and metal finishes that further accentuate the exterior design, Magiati said, “These materials together create a strong architectural presence and help articulate the building at a pedestrian scale.”

That presence and reverence for the area’s rich building tradition is present throughout, but it begins with the extended “welcome” from the brick sidewalk that guides visitors toward the building entrance. The masonry-forward touch helps ground the development in its neighborhood and elevates the arrival experience.

The view up MILLHAUS further elevates the project as massing goes vertical in all of its red brick and black metal beauty: a two-story podium parking structure, designed and built to pedestrian scale with plenty of timeless brick and glazing, with five floors of residences rising above; the upper levels set back in a way that lends the façade depth and proportion.

The RVC team consistently praised the masonry work completed by Unique Custom Exteriors throughout the project. Their ability to interpret and execute the architectural intent, particularly in areas that could not be fully conveyed through the construction documents, made them a key contributor to the project’s success, especially in the architectural masonry band resting below the third-floor deck. As the balconies extend above, Unique and RVC utilized their combined industry experience to incorporate metal scuppers into the design to ensure proper drainage from the units overhead.

Craftsmanship there and across multiple scopes, the RVC team said, transformed the architectural vision into reality while maintaining design integrity throughout.

Decked Out

Touring the project’s second-level deck on a rainy morning, the RVC team points out another drainage-conscious feature: the majority of the podium-level, common area outdoor spaces is constructed on a pedestal deck system designed to allow water to pass through the finished surface and into the underlying drainage system. We may have been praying for rain in Utah, but industry pros from all over will attest that water is best when it is a short-term guest that flows away from the building instead of making a long-term home in a puddle.

Drainage is great, but the real sell is a “hidden garden” for some of the first-floor units—one of many features that make the podium deck a comprehensive residential amenity that nails the design ethos. Residents here can enjoy not just balcony space but cast-in-place garden boxes and landscaping separating the space from an outdoor walkway with views overlooking the surrounding area.

The fitness center that spans floors one and two is much more than the free weights, exercise machines, and lifting racks found within. The first level includes a golf simulator sure to host golfers looking to perfect their game, a motorized rock wall for the climbing enthusiasts, and a roll-up door that opens up for better access to MILLHAUS’s stellar outdoor amenity deck.

There, a resort-style pool and spa, fire features, water features, barbecues, and lounge areas combine to make another compelling sell for new tenants. The views to the south may be even better, a visual and physical connection to Millcreek Common as the deck looks over the city’s rapidly emerging downtown for what Magiati called “a defining feature of the project”

The architect said that fitting the project within the city’s master plan was expected, but creating a project that had an intimate relationship with its surroundings is where MILLHAUS stands out.

Creating an Indoor Mood

Heading from the walkway into the lobby reveals wall coverings and artwork inspired by lifestyle, where the “live, work, play” motto so in vogue became a well to draw from for interior designers at A.P.T. Design Studio. They combined brilliantly with the architectural design, which Magiati said was inspired by the site’s proximity to recreation areas—Millcreek, Little Cottonwood, and Big Cottonwood canyons.

“The design reflects a balance between urban living and outdoor adventure,” Magiati said, where the material palette inside reinforces the project’s industrial-chic identity while maintaining warmth and livability.

The captivating interior design work in the coworking area dovetails brilliantly within the architectural constraints. The color palette, artwork, furniture, and finishes all work to reaffirm the mountain identity, where warmer textures and tones support designers’ task in creating an elevated living space. Wood accents and layered finishes are edgy and earthy, while the PT deck and mechanical were left exposed and painted black, with textures and features adding industrial moments for a moody, regal interior.

The residential lounge achieves a similar feat that chooses to cover the structural and mechanical elements in black industrial tones that extend to the fireplace and wall coverings. Furniture, greenery, art, and wood-toned faux beams on the ceiling provide additional warmth for the cozy confines.

Even transition spaces are rich with connection. Hallways leading to and from the outdoor and indoor common areas contain two of the most unique lighting features I’ve seen, where lighting is recessed behind outward jutting peaks for a striking feature that blends urban sophistication with Utah’s outdoor spirit. The lobby entrance hallway is replete with greenery, tile work, and intentionality as it leads out to the parking garage.

Curved and circular lighting fixtures—some with built-in heaters for winter months—help create an above visual transition between the building interior and enclosed parking garage. Lit bollards below further the connection, separating walkway from driveway for an intentional, pedestrian-friendly welcome for those headed in.

Residential Experience

Above all, the experience must be a livable one for any sort of project sustainability, and Magiati reports that common areas further support a high degree of livability within the units.

Residents enjoy units featuring open-concept kitchen and living areas with efficient layouts across studio, one- or two-bedroom sizes. Windows further brighten the quartz countertops, shaker- or euro-style custom cabinetry, and wide-plank flooring within, for 217 cozy and intentional residences across the project.

Taken together, this project is fashionable in all the right ways while raising the standard for what multifamily projects can be—beyond a coterie of amenities; more than a bunch of units and a parking structure—as connectors to urban living and community.

“The Salt Lake City area is at a pivotal moment,” said Magiati of her out-of-state perspective. “There is a clear shift toward more walkable, mixed-use, and design-driven communities, and MILLHAUS is very much a product of that evolution.”

By understanding context and executing design and construction at the highest level, the combined efforts of AO and RVC delivered a multifamily project full of intention and craft that honors Millcreek’s impressive history as the new city charts its own. ■

MILLHAUS

Location: 1354 Miller Avenue, Millcreek
Delivery Method: Design-Bid-Build
Size: 354,542 SF across 7 stories

Project Team
Owner/Developer: Boyer Company

Design Team
Architect: AO
Civil: CIR Civil Engineering
Electrical: PVE Consulting
Mechanical: PVE Consulting
Structural: Dunn Associates
Geotech: AGEC Applied Geotech
Interior Design: A.P.T Design Studio
Landscape: Urban Arena

Construction Team
General Contractor: RVC Construction
Concrete: Black Rock Concrete
Plumbing: Progressive Plumbing
HVAC: JM Mechanical
Electrical: Bullett Electric
Masonry: Unique Custom Exteriors
Drywall/Acoustics: Tolman Construction
Painting: Paint Tec
Tile/Stone: Oakler Interiors
Framing: Oakler Interiors
Finish Carpentry: L.K.L Associates
Flooring: Oakler Interiors
Roofing: Pro West
Glazing/Curtain Wall: Tanner Glass & Hardware
Waterproofing: Rocky Mountain Waterproofing
Structural Steel Fabrication & Steel Erection: Jack’s Ornamental Iron
Ornamental Iron: SN Steel
Excavation: Hadco Construction, Wind River Excavation
Demolition: Diamond Tree Experts
Landscaping: Waterscape

WASATCH FRONT MULTIFAMILY MANIA

Lifestyle renters, resort-style amenities, and affordability challenges are reshaping apartment development from Brigham City to Santaquin.

By Bradley Fullmer

For decades, apartment living was widely viewed as a temporary stop on the path to homeownership. People rented while saving for a down payment, building their careers, or waiting for the right time to buy a house.

Today, that mindset has changed dramatically.

Across Utah's expanding Wasatch Front—from Brigham City to Santaquin—an increasing number of residents are choosing apartment living not because they cannot afford a home, but because they prefer the lifestyle. At the same time, developers are engaged in an escalating competition to deliver increasingly sophisticated amenity packages that rival private resorts, while policymakers and housing advocates continue searching for solutions to one of Utah's most pressing challenges: creating housing that remains attainable for households across the income spectrum.

The result is a multifamily market undergoing one of the most significant transformations in Utah's history.

"For a long time, renting an apartment was seen as something you did until you could afford to buy a house," said Dan Lofgren, President/CEO of Salt Lake City-based Cowboy Partners. "Renting as a lifestyle choice continues to surge and has been embraced by the market and the industry. There are distinct lifestyle advantages to renting, like truly maintenance-free living, flexibility when it matters, and lock-and-go travel freedom that serve a lot of households' needs very, very well."

That evolution is visible throughout the Wasatch Front, where luxury apartment communities continue attracting young professionals, retirees, empty nesters, remote workers, and even high-income households who could purchase homes but choose not to.

Jory Walker, President of Salt Lake-based Beecher Walker Architects, has witnessed the change firsthand.

"What's changed most over the past 10 to 15 years is the way people view apartment living," Walker said. "Apartments used to be seen as a steppingstone to homeownership. Today, for many people, apartments have become the home."

Why Renting Has Become a Lifestyle Choice

Several factors are driving this lifestyle shift, starting with flexibility. Apartment residents can relocate for career opportunities, travel extensively, or pursue experiences without worrying about home maintenance, landscaping, or major repair expenses.

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> — Dan Lofgren

Others simply prefer the convenience.

"People are willing to give up a yard and some of the traditional aspects of homeownership if they can have access to resort-style amenities," Walker said. "They want great fitness centers, clubhouses, theaters, pools, pickleball courts, gathering spaces, and other experiences that enhance their lifestyle."

The trend initially emerged in urban environments where residents valued walkability and proximity to restaurants, entertainment venues, and employment centers. Today, those same preferences have expanded into suburban communities throughout Weber, Davis, Salt Lake, and Utah counties.

"We first saw this trend emerge in urban centers," Walker continued. "People wanted to live downtown where they could walk to restaurants, bars, and grocery stores. Over time, that mindset has expanded into suburban markets as well."

Changing generational preferences are also playing a role.

"Younger generations don't necessarily aspire to the traditional model of a quarter-acre lot, a two-car garage, and a fenced backyard," Walker said. "Their priorities are different. They value flexibility, experiences, and mobility."

Technology has accelerated the trend. The rise of remote and hybrid work has untethered many professionals from traditional office locations, making apartment living increasingly attractive.

"The pandemic helped remove the requirement that people be tied to a specific office or even a specific home," Walker said. "Apartments support that flexibility. Residents can lock the door, travel, and work remotely while maintaining a high-quality lifestyle."

The Amenity Wars

As renters increasingly view apartments as long-term homes, developers have responded by transforming apartment communities into lifestyle destinations.

The result has been what many in the industry describe as an "amenity arms race."

"The answer here is much more complex than one might guess," Lofgren said. "There just isn't a typical renter."

Lofgren notes that apartment communities today serve a remarkably diverse population.

"Some people are surprised to learn how many 60-plus and 70-plus-year-old residents we host in our communities," he said. "There is also some element of surprise at the concentration of very high-income earners in our communities."

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Because renter demographics are so diverse, developers are increasingly focused on creating communities that offer something for everyone.

Alex Stoddard, Senior Associate at Midvale-based Architecture Belgique, says amenity expectations have changed dramatically during the past decade.

"It's been more than 10 years since we designed 4th West (which opened in 2016). At the time, that level of amenities was mind-boggling for our market," said Stoddard.

Today, many of those same features are considered standard.

"A rooftop deck used to be something that set your project apart," he said. "Now, every multifamily building seems to have a rooftop deck because you have to. If you don't have one, your project is the one that's behind."

Fitness facilities have experienced a similar evolution.

"Small gyms are out," Stoddard said. "Tenants want a 3,000-SF gym. You have to have competitive amenities."

The list of amenities found in today's Wasatch Front apartment communities continues to grow—resort-style pools, pickleball courts, coworking spaces, pet spas, golf simulators, outdoor entertainment areas, wellness centers, and concierge-style services.

"We're seeing concierge-style services become more common," Walker said. "Features like valet trash, package services, and other convenience-oriented amenities help create a higher-end living experience."»

Salt Lake City skyline photo by Dave Johnson

The objective extends beyond creating attractive spaces. Developers are building communities designed to foster social interaction, convenience, and lifestyle experiences that often rival those found in luxury hotels and private clubs.

"The puzzle of what makes for a really compelling community is much more complex than just the amount of sizzle you can generate in your recreational amenities package," Lofgren said.

> "A rooftop deck used to be something that set your project apart. Now, every multifamily building seems to have a rooftop deck because you have to."
> **—Alex Stoddard**

Strong Fundamentals Continue to Drive Demand

Despite economic uncertainty and a slowdown in apartment construction, Utah's underlying fundamentals remain among the strongest in the nation.

"Tariffs, immigration policy, labor shortages and geopolitical conflicts are all contributing to uncertainty," said Dejan Eskic, senior research fellow with the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute. "Consumers and businesses alike are becoming more cautious about making major financial decisions."

Even so, Utah continues to outperform much of the country.

"Nationally, job creation has slowed considerably, but Utah continues to outperform the country as a whole," Eskic said.

The state's demographic advantages continue to support long-term housing demand.

"One of Utah's greatest long-term advantages remains its demographics," Eskic said. "The state has one of the youngest populations in the nation, creating a strong workforce pipeline and supporting long-term economic growth."

Combined with ongoing investment activity along the I-15 corridor, those demographics continue to generate demand for housing.

Between 2020 and 2024, Utah experienced approximately 17% household growth, one of the highest rates in the nation.

"These demographic trends continue to generate strong housing demand," Eskic said.

That demand is expected to remain strong for years to come.

Market Conditions Are Beginning to Stabilize

Following a decade-long apartment development boom, market conditions are beginning to rebalance.

"As fewer new apartment projects enter lease-up, competition for tenants decreases," said Jeff Neese, President of Western States Multifamily Appraisals & Consulting. "When vacancy rates begin to decline, rents typically increase. Across the Wasatch Front, rents have generally been flat for the past three years, although conditions vary by submarket."

The slowdown in construction activity has allowed many submarkets to absorb recent deliveries and stabilize occupancy levels.

At the same time, developers are beginning to adapt to today's financing environment.

"I think everyone's kind of realized interest rates are going to stay where they are," Stoddard said. "A lot of projects were put on hold while people waited for things to settle down. Now we're starting to see some of those projects move forward."

Contractors are also experiencing changing market conditions.

"Our general contractors are telling us they're getting a lot more bids than they used to get," Stoddard said. "People are fighting for work a little bit more again rather than just naming a price and getting it."

Why Projects Still Don't Pencil

While demand remains strong, bringing new multifamily projects to market remains difficult.

Construction costs, financing expenses, insurance premiums, and land prices have all increased significantly during the past several years. And the very real specter of inflation—largely due to the fallout from the insidious and impossible-to-explain War in Iran—could very well cause a spike in interest rates and further threaten developers' ability to make projects pencil.

"One of the biggest challenges facing development today is economics," Walker said. "Five or six years ago, apartment projects could be built for approximately $185,000 per unit. Today, many projects are approaching $300,000 per unit."

The increase has created substantial feasibility challenges.

"There is significant capital available, but investors need to achieve certain returns before projects become viable," Walker said. "Right now, many projects simply don't pencil out."

Neese says feasibility depends on numerous interconnected factors.

"There are many moving parts that determine whether an apartment project becomes feasible," he said. "Construction costs are one factor, but financing costs, demand, rental rates and several other variables all have to align at the same time."

A decade ago, the 4th West project raised the bar on Salt Lake's multifamily market, with modern, high-end amenities including a dynamic rooftop pool deck. (photo by Dana Sohm, Sohm Photogrfx)

Some projects have remained dormant for years.

"We have seen apartment projects remain on the sidelines for seven or eight years waiting for the right conditions to move forward," Neese said.

> "There is strong demand for affordable housing, but those projects face many of the same feasibility challenges as market-rate developments, particularly rising construction costs."
> **—Jeff Neese**

Lofgren agreed, saying, "As compared to five years ago, interest rates and construction costs are high and getting development to pencil is hard."

The challenge has reinforced the importance of strategic project planning.

"We help clients determine what a particular market needs and what is financially feasible," Neese said. "That includes evaluating unit sizes, unit mix, construction type and building configuration."

The Affordable Housing Challenge

While luxury apartment communities continue attracting residents seeking flexibility and lifestyle amenities, "Housing affordability remains one of the state's most pressing challenges," Eskic said.

The issue is driven by both home prices and mortgage rates.

"The median home price in Utah peaked at approximately $540,000 in 2022 and remains above $500,000 today," Eskic said.

The result is a widening affordability gap.

"Today, it is often significantly less expensive to rent than to own," Eskic said. "In Salt Lake County, the monthly cost of owning a typical single-family home is approximately $3,600 compared with roughly $2,500 to rent a similar property."

As a result, homeownership has become increasingly difficult for many households.

"Nearly 90% of renter households in Utah are now priced out of purchasing a median-priced home," Eskic said.

Neese notes that these pressures are affecting all types of multifamily development.

"There is strong demand for affordable housing, but those projects face many of the same feasibility challenges as market-rate developments, particularly rising construction costs," he said.

Competition for Low-Income Housing Tax Credits remains intense, while bond-financed affordable housing projects face their own leasing and financing challenges.

For Lofgren, the issue extends beyond simply increasing unit counts.

"There are households who need housing right now, and it isn't within reach," he said. "It isn't just about creating housing. It is, in my opinion, the attainability of that housing that matters. We could create 150,000 units, but if they are the wrong ones, it won't help all that much."

Looking Ahead

Despite today's challenges, industry leaders remain optimistic about the long-term future of multifamily housing along the Wasatch Front, where demographic strength, economic diversity, and continued population growth continue to support long-term housing demand.

At the same time, developers, architects, and policymakers will continue searching for ways to create housing that is both desirable and attainable, which Lofgren believes can be assisted by innovation.

"Another emerging force in the industry about which I am particularly excited, and which I think may have transformative potential, is modular housing," he said.

Ultimately, the future of multifamily housing along the Wasatch Front will be defined by two powerful, seemingly contradictory forces reshaping the next generation of apartment development across the region. The first is a growing population of renters who increasingly view apartments as a preferred lifestyle choice. The second is the urgent need to provide housing options that remain within reach of Utah households.

As Lofgren put it, "Housing matters."

And in Utah's rapidly growing economy, ensuring that housing is both available and attainable may be the industry's most important challenge for years to come. ■

Key 2026 Wasatch Front Multifamily Statistics

- The Salt Lake City/Wasatch Front market has approx. **154,000 multifamily units (50+ units per property)** across nearly 900 apartment communities spanning Box Elder, Weber, Davis, Salt Lake, Utah and surrounding counties.
- Metro vacancy is currently running at **7%**, essentially flat but improving from peak oversupply conditions.
- Occupancy is approximately **94%**, with suburban markets generally tightening faster than downtown Salt Lake City.
- Average rent across the Wasatch Front metro is expected in increase **1.5%** to **$1,540 per month**.
- Downtown Salt Lake City is outperforming many submarkets, posting **3% annual rent growth** and average rents over **$1,800 per month**.
- The construction pipeline is shrinking rapidly. Developers delivered **9,430 units during 2025**, one of the largest supply additions in Wasatch Front history. The number of market-rate units currently under construction has fallen to **6,200 units**, the lowest level in more than eight years.
- Approximately **3,200 units** are expected to be delivered in 2026. While this represents roughly 1,200 fewer units than were completed in 2025, inventory growth of **2%** remains among the 10 fastest rates in major U.S. markets.
- Vacancy is forecast to decline by **20 points** to **4.5%**.

Beautiful Vue

The Vue at Desert Color Brings Resort-Style Living to Exciting New St. George Development

By Milt Harrison

As growth continues across Southern Utah, new residential developments are responding to increasing demand for high-quality housing options that combine convenience, amenities, and modern design.

One of the latest additions to the rapidly expanding Desert Color community in St. George is The Vue at Desert Color, a $41 million, 300-unit, resort-style multifamily development designed to elevate apartment living while complementing the area's vibrant master-planned environment.

The first phase of The Vue delivered 180 units across four residential buildings, along with a central clubhouse and extensive recreational amenities. Phase II will include two additional apartment buildings and 120 more units, making it one of the more sizeable multifamily offerings within Desert Color.

The layout of the units was a critical factor for the developer, which required considerable time getting the design exactly right, said Jory Walker, Principal-in-Charge and Lead Designer for Salt Lake-based Beecher Walker.

"One of the most interesting aspects of the project was the amount of attention PEG Development devoted to the apartment units themselves," said Walker. "We spent the first [45 days] almost entirely on unit layouts and creating innovative solutions for end units, interior corner units and exterior corner units. In many multifamily projects, those units can become an afterthought. Architects often default to repeating the same floor plan and filling awkward spaces with storage areas or other secondary uses. By carefully studying each unit type, we were able to take advantage of opportunities unique to corner and end units and create more functional, livable spaces."

The Vue fits in well with the surrounding desert landscape and offers residents direct access to an extensive network of walking, jogging, and biking trails that connect throughout the community and is designed to appeal to a wide range of residents, with studio, one-, two-, and three-bedroom floor plans, along with covered assigned parking and top-shelf amenities.

"[The owners] focused on tenant experiences [...] our team provided optimized quality, efficiencies, and value during design, construction, and occupancy phases—each ahead of schedule and under budget," said Ed Deffner, Construction Manager for Sandy-based Layton Construction, who added that his team was able to mitigate rising project costs and work closely with subcontractors to keep the project on track. " We developed our GMP right as interest rates skyrocketed in 2022 (and the) project didn't pencil out and was put on hold. We met with our intended trade partners and committed to each other to keep the project together and make it viable. Team creativity and unity inspired us to find ways to minimize risks, trim costs, and maintain quality."

Architecturally, The Vue embraces a modern aesthetic that reflects the evolving character of Southern Utah's residential market, with the buildings featuring a combination of metal siding, stucco and honed concrete masonry unit (CMU) exterior finishes. Flat rooflines and projecting balconies create visual interest while contributing to the development's contemporary appearance.

> "Architects often default to repeating the same floor plan and filling awkward spaces with storage areas or other secondary uses. By carefully studying each unit type, we were able to take advantage of opportunities unique to corner and end units and create more functional, livable spaces."
> **— Jory Walker**

The clubhouse serves as the focal point of the community and incorporates similar materials while introducing distinctive architectural features such as butterfly roofs and trellis elements. These design features create shaded gathering spaces and establish a recognizable identity within the larger Desert Color community.

Amenities Take Center Stage; Interior Elements Shine

A major emphasis of the project is its extensive amenity offering, creating an environment that rivals many hospitality-focused developments.

The centerpiece is a resort-style pool and spa complex featuring a lazy »

river, providing residents with a unique recreational experience uncommon in traditional apartment communities. Additional outdoor amenities include a covered barbecue pavilion with picnic seating, fire pits with lounge areas, and expansive turf spaces designed for recreation and community gatherings.

Inside the clubhouse, residents have access to more than 2,000 SF of fitness space equipped with a variety of exercise machines, free weights, and a dedicated yoga studio featuring an interactive training screen.

The clubhouse's social areas are equally robust, incorporating a clubroom with contemporary seating arrangements, banquet-style gathering spaces, a kitchenette, fireplace, pool table, and shuffleboard table. The combination of active and social amenities reflects the project's focus on creating a community-centered living environment.

Apartment interiors have been designed with functionality and comfort in mind. Each residence includes modern finishes and quality fixtures throughout, along with full-sized washers and dryers. The variety of floor plans allows the development to accommodate everyone from young professionals and students to families and retirees seeking maintenance-free living.

The emphasis on quality interior finishes and community amenities positions The Vue as a premium multifamily offering within one of Utah's fastest-growing residential markets.

All-Electric Building Systems Highlight Project Sustainability

The Vue also reflects the growing trend toward building electrification in multifamily construction.

Apartment buildings utilize all-electric systems, including electric water heaters, heat pump HVAC systems and electric appliances. Natural gas service is limited to the clubhouse facility.

Mechanical systems include rooftop units serving the clubhouse and individual electric heat pumps for apartment residences. The all-electric design supports energy efficiency goals while simplifying utility infrastructure throughout the residential portions of the project.

Structurally, The Vue employs a wood-frame construction system utilizing wood floor joists and wood roof trusses, a cost-effective and widely used approach for multifamily developments of this scale. Steel columns and beams are incorporated where required, particularly for balcony structures and portions of the clubhouse, providing additional strength and durability while supporting the project's architectural vision.

"The units function almost like building blocks—you determine the desired mix of one-, two- and three-bedroom units, assemble them into the building configuration, and then stack them vertically to create the final structure," said Walker.

"The key to a successful multifamily project is investing the necessary time upfront to ensure the units themselves are thoughtfully designed and highly functional. That foundation ultimately drives the success of the entire development." ■

The Vue at Desert Color

Location: St George
Start/Completion: December 2023/June 2025
Cost: $41 million
Delivery Method: Design-Build/Assist
Stories/Levels: Four 3-story Apartment buildings, 1-story clubhouse
Owner: PEG Companies, Woodbury Corporation, Desert Color

Design Team
Architect: Beecher Walker
Civil Engineer: Bush & Gudgell
Electrical Engineer: Hunt Electric
Mechanical Engineer: Shakespeare Engineering
Structural Engineer: Dunn Associates
Geotechnical Engineer: AGEC
Interior Design: KJ Designs
Landscape Architect: John Costanza

Construction Team
General Contractor: Layton Construction
Concrete: MS Concrete
Plumbing: Tom's Mechanical
HVAC: Ace Mechanical Contractors
Electrical: Hunt Electric
Masonry: BA Robinson Construction
Drywall: KYCO
Painting: Accent Painting
Tile/Stone: Mojave Home Center, Unique Custom Exteriors
Millwork: CP Build
Flooring: Mojave Home Center
Roofing: Skyline Roofing
Glazing/Curtain Wall: USI All Purpose Windows & Doors
Waterproofing: WeatherSealed Incorporated
Steel Fabrication: Fab-Tec
Steel Erection: Stark Welding
Excavation: Suncore Construction & Materials
Landscaping: Stratton & Brätt

A world-class clubhouse (opposite page) highlights the amenity package of Phase I of The Vue at Desert Color. Interior spaces are lively and daylight infused. A modern gym and spacious pool deck add a level of sophistication. (photos courtesy PEG Development; Layton Construction).

The Intermountain Chapter of the International Interior Design Association (IIDA) held its annual BEST Awards competition on May 28 at the Natural History Museum of Utah, with Jacoby Architects capturing multiple honors, including the "BEST of the BEST", for the firm's design of the Weber | Blackstone Corporate Headquarters, while VCBO won the "People's Choice" award for the design of Fullmer Legacy Center.

IIDA's BEST awards are among the most prestigious given to interior design professionals in residential and commercial markets. These awards celebrate project partnerships required to achieve such dynamic designs, from consultant teams, project managers, vendors, contractors, and more. Designers and firms submitted a unique array of projects that went above and beyond normal interior design to truly encompass "BEST"—brilliantly executed spaces and thinking—in function, form, and style.

Brilliantly Executed Spaces & Thinking

Nine captivating projects, from Alpine to Boise, receive interior design honors at IIDA Intermountain's annual awards event.

The interiors of Weber | Blackstone Corporate Headquarters are an homage to the backyard, with planter boxes and greenery, boulder-inspired breakout spaces, and plenty of seating to take it all in. (All images courtesy IIDA Intermountain)

BEST of the BEST & BEST Work/Office

Weber | Blackstone Headquarters
Jacoby Architects

The Weber | Blackstone Headquarters is a 95,000-SF, two-level commercial office building on a pastoral site in Providence. The facility contains a research and development area for designing, engineering, and prototyping new products; a commercial kitchen and dining area to support 250 employees; test kitchens and showrooms for marketing efforts; a light-filled common area with interior trees and topographically inspired lecture steps; a full size gymnasium with running track and fitness area; open office spaces, enclosed offices, and conference rooms for company operations; entry plazas, and extensive backyard landscaping and pathways adjacent to a river and natural springs on site.

As a company based in outdoor cooking and backyard entertaining, the concept for the Weber | Blackstone building and site design took inspiration from the idea of the backyard. The building form took on the shape of wings, delicately landing on this beautiful site; wings that also signified Weber | Blackstone taking off as a successful product design company. The footprint of the building was oriented such that it opened its arms to the backyard concept, looking out to the river and springs in the backdrop, and continuing this natural, welcoming design theme inside. ››

People's Choice

Fullmer Legacy Center

VCBO Architecture

The Fullmer brothers, Gene, Don, and Jay, were professional boxers from South Jordan who earned heavyweight and middleweight championships and a spot in the boxing hall of fame for their efforts in the 1950s and 1960s.

They chose to honor this success by extending the same opportunity that was given to them, to provide lessons at no cost to underprivileged and at risk youth through the Fullmer Legacy Foundation, which has given direction and discipline to over 2,200 students since the 1960s. The foundation accomplished this mission using any space that could be provided to them for free, most with little to no amenities.

Today, their children and grandchildren continue this legacy in their own gym—the Fullmer Legacy Center—a 16,500-SF, two-level building that came together under top-tier financial stewardship from owners, designers, and builders, and many donations from fellow trade partners. In addition to a state-of-the-art competition boxing ring and seating, the facility sports top-notch locker rooms and training equipment, including heavy bags, speed bags, weights, etc. The building also includes The Fullmer Hall of Fame Museum for visitors to connect with the past via memorabilia, photos, and old newspaper clippings—900 articles related to the trio's boxing exploits.

BEST Live Multi-Unit & Single-Family Residence

The Village

Ezra Lee Design + Build

Tucked into the mountains of Alpine, this contemporary residence was designed as a private retreat that embraces landscape, family life, and play. The objective was to create a modern home that feels both architecturally bold and deeply connected to its surroundings, capturing unobstructed mountain views while preserving privacy from the street above.

The layout responds directly to the cascading site. Rectilinear volumes stretch and shift to frame Lone Peak with precision, ensuring every major space engages the view without interruption. Copious glazing and a palette of natural materials ground the home in its setting, balancing modern form with organic warmth.

At the heart of the home, a sculptural kitchen floats within the great room as a social centerpiece, designed to encourage gathering and conversation. Beyond the main living spaces, dedicated zones for wellness, recreation, and sports reflect a work hard, play hard lifestyle. From a private deck with sauna and cold plunge to an indoor sports level and expansive outdoor amenities, the home supports both restoration and activity for a mountain oasis that merges architecture, interior design, and landscape into one cohesive, experiential living environment.

BEST Play Restaurant, Lounges, Bars, Retail & Boutiques

Lagoon Amusement Park

WOW Atelier, STRUCK

Located at a pivotal crossroads within the park, the building anchors one of its most important moments—the transition from arrival into the wider grounds.

The project is composed of three interconnected environments: Carousel Candy, a confectionary space; Peacock Parlour, an ice cream and gelato destination; and a central double-height atrium that links both while guiding guests toward a future second-level venue.

Carousel Candy integrates repurposed vintage carousel horses beneath a custom canopy ceiling, supported by bespoke millwork and tailored display systems. Peacock Parlour draws from the park's roaming peacocks, featuring a stained-glass focal menu wall, sculpted metal feathers, custom seating, and a terrazzo floor that gently organizes movement.

BEST Learn K-12 & Higher Education

Carolyn & Kem Gardner Learning & Leadership Building

MHTN Architects

This new facility on the southern end of Utah State University's Logan campus strengthens the Huntsman School of Business by bringing five academic centers together under one roof, supporting programs focused on leadership, innovation, and real-world experience.

Design supports the schools efforts via flexible, comfortable environments that support experiential learning by providing spaces for collaboration, practice, and creation. Open hubs, mentoring areas, and adaptable workspaces encourage interaction between students, faculty, and industry partners, fostering leadership development through hands-on engagement.

Balancing professionalism with energy and warmth, the building features abundant natural light and strong visual connections to campus and Cache Valley. Carefully considered materiality and spatial openness create an inviting, inspiring environment. Biophilic design strategies guided the integration of natural materials, daylighting, and indoor-outdoor connections, supporting both occupant well-being and environmental responsibility, reflecting a human-centered approach that integrates experiential learning, community connection, and wellness into a cohesive and inspiring academic environment.››

BEST Serve Public/Civic

Marshall N. White Community Center
VCBO Architecture

The original Marshall N. White Community Center was built in 1969, in honor of Utah's first Black police officer to be killed in the line of duty in 1963. It was a fitting tribute, as White was a beloved mentor who enjoyed boxing and playing basketball with Ogden's west-side youth. After decades of heavy use, the 1960s-era facility could no longer meet community needs, and neighborhood activists started a grassroots movement to have it repaired or replaced.

Reimagined in partnership with Ogden City and shaped by extensive community input, the new center replaces the outdated structure with a modern, welcoming space designed for recreation, learning, and connection. As Ogden's only public community recreation facility, it plays a critical role in serving residents of all ages, cultures, and abilities with durable and timeless materials along with artwork and murals that showcase local pride.

More than a replacement, the project restores a community anchor—fostering health, pride, opportunity, and belonging while investing in the long-term vitality of Ogden's west side.

BEST on a Budget Commercial & Residential: Under $150/SF

Confidential Client Office Space
EDA

This workplace renovation transforms the office into a compelling destination for employees returning from remote work. Comfortable furniture in neutral and natural tones and materials help to deliver a higher level of comfort to the space, especially present in the wooden slats that cover the mechanical systems above. The connection with interior and exterior glazing helps to deliver an elevated working environment—and not just because of the rich, elevated views out to downtown.

By rethinking space efficiency and opening the interior to daylight, the project creates an environment that supports collaboration, comfort, and shared experience while reducing its overall footprint and long-term environmental impact. »

BEST Give Healthcare

The Kem and Carolyn Gardner Mental Health Crisis Care Center
FFKR Architects

The Kem and Carolyn Gardner Mental Health Crisis Care Center in South Salt Lake establishes a new standard of care by blending necessary safety measures with elevated design to provide a dignified path toward recovery. This bold investment in the future of mental health embodies a "no wrong door" philosophy, ensuring every person in crisis, arriving voluntarily or with first responders, is welcomed, stabilized, treated, and connected to future care.

This three-story, 81,600-SF center responds to patients with varying risk levels, featuring an integrated 30-chair observation unit on Level 1 that combines hospitality-inspired biophilic design to create a welcoming, non-institutional space. The staircase between the first two floors acts as an architectural centerpiece, where natural wood accents and open form symbolize transparency and progression in the care journey and encourage movement between each floor. The same calming materials, tree branch wall reliefs, and strategic lighting carry on from the lower lobby to the Level 2 shared waiting area for outpatient services.

Beyond clinical care, the center addresses social determinants of health, offering legal, dental, and wellness services with a host of durable and warm materials, tunable lighting, soft edges, and more—shifting the paradigm in how mental health care is perceived and delivered, turning crisis intervention into a compassionate, dignified, human-centered experience.

BEST Stay Hotels

The Grove Hotel
EDGEiD

Nestled in the heart of Boise, Idaho, The Grove Hotel has long been an icon of luxury and sophistication. As the city's premier destination for travelers seeking comfort and elegance, the hotel underwent a transformative redesign that pays homage to its unique surroundings.

Inspired by Boise's moniker as the "City of Trees," this interior design narrative envisioned a captivating new atmosphere that seamlessly blends nature's beauty with contemporary aesthetics, crafting an unforgettable experience for each and every guest—one full of natural allure and charm.

Every aspect of the interior design aims to create an atmosphere that links contemporary luxury with the tranquility of nature. A prominent material palette echoes the earthy tones of Boise's landscape, such as warm browns, cool grays, and organic greens. Carpets were inspired by textures of tree bark, the natural topography, and the leaf motif. Murals and mosaics drew inspiration from the local flora and fauna, showcasing vibrant colors and textures that evoke a sense of harmony and vitality.

From the moment guests arrive, they will be enveloped in an environment that celebrates the city's green heritage, fostering a profound connection with both the hotel and Boise's vibrant surroundings. ■

Can-Do Celebrations

CANstruction delivers a meaningful way for the industry to help the community fight hunger and food insecurity while showcasing the immense talents of Utah's A/E/C professionals.

By Taylor Larsen

Members of the "Red, White, and Soup" team construct a soup can replica of the Liberty Bell in celebration of America250, sponsored by Salt Lake County. (Left image by Taylor Larsen; right image, all images on pg. 115 by Austen Diamond, courtesy SL County)

Eight layers into a modular construction project mid-May, we were so far ahead of schedule. Maybe too far. Now, we were looking at cost overruns, long lead times, and rework.

It wasn't even 10 AM.

Project from hell? No way. CANstruction is too much fun.

With 2026 marking America's 250th birthday, AIA Utah and many industry partners joined with Salt Lake County for CANstruction—where eight Salt Lake County buildings would host sculptures made entirely out of canned food and dry goods made by project teams containing members and firms from across the A/E/C spectrum. The sculptures would go toward raising awareness for the over 360,000 people estimated to experience food insecurity in the Beehive State, and seek to aid the Utah Food Bank in its efforts to bring that number to zero.

Design for the sculptures would follow the theme: "Honoring our Past, Feeding our Future."

For Holladay's Lions Recreation Center, that meant a modular construction replica of the Liberty Bell, the most famous member of the brass chorus that sang in the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence four days after the "Founding Fathers" signed it in 1776.

But the 2026 Liberty Bell only had the time it took John Hancock's signature to dry—eight hours—to build a red, white, and blue replica of the Philadelphia icon.

Thank goodness for precon.

Rewind back to February, when the "Red, White, and Soup" project team first met. Consisting of architects from HOK, builders from *rand construction, engineers at Calder Richards Structural Consultants; with trade partner—in the most generous sense of the word—UC+D brought on in early design-assist.

As inspiration hit Correy Seldon (*rand construction), Marc Shields (Calder Richards) and Alex Peng (HOK) brought it to life on paper, where additional meetings brought value engineering (the good kind) to ensure structural integrity, high design, and cohesion in form and function—making a meal from the canned food without making a meal of the canned food.

After a practice build the week before, construction day arrived. A stellar logistics team from Modular Interiors Moving delivered materials to the "jobsite"—the space just beyond the facility's reception desk for all patrons to see.

As "can-struction" commenced, the bell portion was going as fast as modular construction could go, with teammates placing alternating layers of chili beans—red can fronts facing out first, the next layer rotated to the white stripe of the nutrition label, then a circular plywood topper added for weight distribution and structural integrity. The pattern repeated in alternating red and white stripes and gently tapered into the bell shape as more layers rose. Purple-clad pinto beans functioned as both the Liberty Bell's famous crack and supports on either side of the bell in preparation for final seven layers of the blue-clad original applesauce cans that made up the "headstock" above the bell.

We were flying.

But eight layers up, our lack of quality control meant that we were running out of red cans. We had over-engineered and filled the voids required to maximize our materials.

Seldon went out for additional procurement—diced tomatoes are always welcome regardless of lead time—as the field team began the rework by disassembling, reassembling, disassembling, and reassembling the sculpture—necessary voids and all. Back on schedule, back on budget, back on track.

Ladders came in to assist with the headstock scope, with a layer of tape going around the applesauce cans, whose extra ounce in size delivered a unique field condition—they did not stack snugly into place atop each other. But finishing work helped ensure assembly fully matched the design intent.

Said Seldon, "I definitely underestimated the degree of coordination required for CANstruction. There are so many moving parts and pieces."

In just under five hours, "Red, White,

and Soup" finished the Liberty Bell as the other teams around the county completed their sculptures to honor American history—27,994 cans in total across eight Salt Lake County facilities—as one of over 100 participating cities and areas nationwide.

The massive local success was led by a trio of Angie Harris-Roberts (AIA Utah), Laura Tungseth (Armstrong Group), and Shelby King (Kimball International).

Harris-Roberts, AIA's Utah's Executive Director, said raising awareness for food insecurity in the community and delivering above and beyond the original goal ($25,000 in donated food) an honor made more special by the unique way CANstruction highlights the many facets of the design and construction industry.

"This is an event that AIA Utah truly enjoys being involved in because it brings so many of our partners together," she said, complimenting the collaboration, problem-solving, and attention to detail that come together to create stunning and playful designs. "It definitely reminds me that we need to build bridges and work with allied organizations."

Much as the Liberty Bell rang out nearly 250 years ago, Harris-Roberts is hopeful that this work reverberates, where "kids will see the designs and ask questions about architecture, engineering and construction," she said. "If we can plant that small seed of interest, then maybe someday an architect will tell me that they first heard of architecture when they headed to the Sorenson Rec Center to go swimming. That would be incredible." ■

Utah Construction + Design is pleased to publish its 14th annual list of the Top Architectural Firms in Utah, based on revenues generated in 2025 by a firm's Utah offices. Projects outside of Utah that are billed to Utah-based offices are included. Firms who chose not to disclose revenues (DND) are listed after revenue-disclosing firms by number of employees.

2026 TOP UTAH ARCHITECTURAL FIRM RANKINGS

	Firm Name Address	Phone Website	Year Est.	Top Executive Title Years at Firm	Largest Utah Project to Finish in 2025 Largest Utah Project to Start in 2026	# Employees # Lic. Archs # LEED AP	Annual Revenues (millions) 2025	2024	2023	Top Markets	%
1.	**FFKR Architects** 730 Pacific Avenue Salt Lake City, UT 84104	801-521-6186 ffkr.com	1976	Mike Leishman President 18	Solhavn Apartments - American Fork Sol at Trails East - St. George	161 74 15	**$57.2**	$44.7	$44.5	Religious Multifamily Office	24% 21% 19%
2.	**VCBO Architecture** 524 S 600 E Salt Lake City, UT 84102	801-575-8800 vcbo.com	1973	N/A	Deseret Peak High School - Tooele West High School - Salt Lake City	123 41 8	**$37.0**	$47.5	$50.0	K-12 Higher Ed Sports/Rec	48% 20% 13%
3.	**MHTN Architects** 280 S 400 W # 250 Salt Lake City, UT 84101	801-595-6700 mhtn.com	1923	Peggy McDonough Jan President 24	Stansbury Junior High School - Stansbury Park University of Utah Health WVC Hospital - West Valley City	118 45 20	**$36.9**	$28.8	$26.3	K-12 Other Healthcare	34% 20% 19%
4.	**Method Studio** 360 W Aspen Ave Salt Lake City, UT 84101	801-532-4422 method-studio.com	2007	Becky Hawkins CEO 19	Ephraim Utah Temple - Ephraim Larry H. & Gail Miller Arts Center - South Jordan	96 32 18	**$31.6**	$18.8	$27.1	Higher Ed Civic/Inst. Resort/Hosp.	25% 15% 15%
5.	**Architectural Nexus** 2505 E Parleys Way Salt Lake City, UT 84109	801-924-5000 archnexus.com	1974	Robb Harrop President 28	One Burton Apartments - Salt Lake City DND	68 68 12	**$28.9**	$30.9	$43.8	Healthcare Comm/Retail Civic/Inst.	54% 18% 11%
6.	**AE Urbia** 909 W South Jordan Pkwy. South Jordan, UT 84095	801-830-1979 aeurbia.com	2004	James M Williams President 22	Nusano - West Valley City Zion Shores - Washington	45 7 1	**$23.9**	$16.7	$17.1	Industrial Office Multifamily	50% 20% 15%
7.	**NWL Architects** 723 Pacific Ave Salt Lake City, UT 84104	801-355-5959 nwlarchitects.com	1952	Christopher Lund President 31	Cyprus High School - Magna Highland High School - Salt Lake City	70 15 6	**$22.5**	$20.0	$12.0	K-12 Religious Civic/Inst.	59% 30% 5%
8.	**GSBS Architects** 375 W 200 S Salt Lake City, UT 84101	801-521-8600 gsbsarchitects.com	1978	Kevin Miller President & CEO 37	Sunset Junior High School - Sunset Spanish Fork Junior High School - Spanish Fork	75 26 17	**$20.0**	$26.0	$22.0	Other Higher Ed Resort/Hosp.	18% 17% 16%
9.	**CORE Architecture** 233 S Pleasant Grove Blvd. #105 Pleasant Grove, UT 84062	801-769-3000 corearch.com	1998	Curtis Miner President 28	Deer Creek High School - Heber City Heber Valley Utah Temple - Heber City	46 16	**$14.2**	$10.0	$10.8	Civic/Inst. K-12 Multifamily	25% 20% 20%
10.	**Babcock Design** 52 Exchange Place Salt Lake City, UT 84111	801-531-1144 babcockdesign.com	1985	Rob Cottle CEO 25	Utah Mammoth Ice Center - Sandy SL County Office Building - Midvale	41 15 6	**$13.8**	$13.3	$12.8	Comm/Retail Civic/Inst. Office	20% 15% 15%
11.	**Design West Architects** 2200 South Main, # 100 Salt Lake City, UT 84115	801-539-8221 designwestarchitects.com	1892	Blake Wright President 37	DND	35 14 2	**$11.7**	$12.3	$7.7	Higher Ed K-12 Fed-military	29% 28% 10%
12.	**Think Architecture** 7927 S High Point Parkway, #300 Sandy, UT 84094	801-269-0055 thinkaec.com	1980	Corey R. Solum President / CEO 30	Velvaere - Park City 9th Note - Salt Lake City	32 14 2	**$7.5**	$9.7	$10.5	Multifamily Resort/Hosp. Comm/Retail	36% 15% 12%
13.	**EDA** 9 Exchange Place # 1100 Salt Lake City, UT 84111	801-531-7600 edaarch.com	1954	Thomas Brennan Principal 29	University of Utah L. S. Skaggs Applied Science Building - Salt Lake City Wasatch County Center - Heber City	25 5 3	**$6.1**	$5.8	$5.4	Civic/Inst. Higher Ed Office	42% 36% 22%
14.	**Beecher Walker** 3115 E Lion Lane, # 200 Holladay, UT 84121	801-438-9500 beecherwalker.com	1998	Jory Walker; Lyle Beecher President; CEO 28	The Focal Apartments - Murray Wasatch Rock Apartments - Cottonwood Heights	25 7 1	**$5.9**	$7.8	$8.0	Multifamily Resort/Hosp. Office	50% 20% 15%

Utah Architecture Firms Maintaining Momentum

UC+D's list of 2026 Utah's Top Architectural Firms (based on 2025 revenues) illustrates that the state's top architecture firms continue to thrive in a relatively busy market. **FFKR** tops this year's rankings with $57.2 million (M) in revenue, more than $20 M more than No. 2 **VCBO** ($37 M) and No. 3 **MHTN** ($36.9 M). Rounding out the Top 5 are **Method Studio** at No. 4 ($31.6 million) and **Architectural Nexus** at No. 5 with $28.9 M.

The next five include three firms over the $20 million mark: **AE Urbia** ($23.9 M), **NWL** ($22.5 M), and **GSBS** ($20 M), followed by **CORE** at $14.2 M and **Babcock Design** at $13.8 M.

Design West is 11th at $11.7 M, with **Think** ($7.5 M), **EDA** ($6.1 M), and **Beecher Walker** ($5.9 M) at spots 12-14, and then **Pathe Studio** and **Case, Lowe & Hart** tied at 15th at $5.5 M. **MINT** ($4.3 M), **WPA** ($1.1 M), and **di'velept** ($1.1 M) conclude the list of revenue-disclosing firms.

Of the firms not disclosing revenues (DND), three have employee numbers of at least 30: **Galloway** (42 employees), **ajc** (32), and **HKS** (30), which would put them among the Top 15 firms, size-wise.

From an individual market view, education remains a big driver. The top K-12 firms include VCBO (48% of revenues), MHTN (34%), NWL (59%), Design West (28%), and **KMA** (80%). Prominent Higher Education designers include VCBO (20%), Method (25%), GSBS (17%), Design West (29%), EDA (36%), Pathe (20%), WPA (16%), ajc (20%), **TSA** (15%), and **Jacoby** (50%).

Multifamily remains a hot market for many firms, including FFKR (21%), AE Urbia (15%), CORE (20%), Think (36%), Beecher Walker (50%), MINT (30%), di'velept (56%), ajc (20%), **Architecture Belgique** (90%), and **Line 29** (25%).

Resort/Hospitality (some definite similarities to Multifamily) was a solid market for Method (15%), GSBS (16%), Think (15%), Beecher Walker (20%), HKS

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15.	**Pathe Studio Architects** 171 Pierpont Ave Salt Lake City, UT 84109	801-712-4080 pathe.studio	1976	Jay Lems Principal 25	Draper Medical Manufacturing - Draper Zions Bank Jackson Branch - Jackson, WY	18 4 1	**$5.5**	$6.1	$5.1	Comm/Retail Other Higher Ed	30% 30% 20%
15.	**Case, Lowe & Hart** 2484 Washington Blvd. #510 Ogden, UT 84041	801-399-5821 clhae.com	1963	Steve Peterson President 21	Young Subaru Dealership - Riverdale Northrop Grumman Building - Promontory	9 1 1	**$5.5**	$3.8	$2.6	Industrial Office Comm/Retail	50% 25% 25%
17.	**MINT Architecture** 7585 S Union Park Ave. #220 Sandy, UT 84047	801-996-3646 designwithmint.com	2020	Corey Middleton Principal 6	Desert Sol Townhomes - Moab Union Row Townhomes - Midvale	17 2	**$4.3**	$2.9	$2.6	Office Multifamily Healthcare	40% 30% 10%
18.	**WPA Architecture** 1535 North Freedom Blvd. Provo, UT 84604	801-374-0800 wpa-architecture.com	1994	Bruce T. Fallon President 21	Deer Valley Skier Services Building - Park City CVMC Phase VI Addition & Remodel - Nephi	8 2 1	**$1.1**	$1.5	$1.5	Office Civic/Inst. Higher Ed	19% 17% 16%
19.	**di'velept design** 454 N 600 W Salt Lake City, UT 84116	801-680-4485 divelept.com	2014	Jarod Hall Principal Architect 12	Art West Townhomes - Salt Lake City Van Buren Apartment - Salt Lake City	8 3 1	**$1.1**	$1.5	$1.3	Multifamily Industrial Comm/Retail	56% 28% 12%

Firms that Did Not Disclose Revenues (listed by # of employees)

Firm Name Address	Phone Website	Year Est.	Top Executive Title Years at Firm	Largest Utah Project to Finish in 2025 Largest Utah Project to Start in 2026	# Employees # Lic. Archs # LEED AP	2025	2024	2023	Top Markets	%
Galloway 577 S 200 E Salt Lake City, UT 84111	801-533-2100 gallowayus.com	1982	Scott Holmes Principal 27	St. George City Hall - St. George North Pointe Solid Waste Transfer Station - Lindon	42 5 4	DND	DND	DND	Civic/Inst. Comm/Retail Office	78% 14% 2%
ajc architects 703 E 1700 S Salt Lake City, UT 84105	801-657-2575 ajcarchitects.com	1991	Jill A. Jones Executive Principal 35	Placemakr Salt Lake City Downtown, Apartments by Hilton Hotels - Salt Lake City Spanish Fork Fire Station 61 - Spanish Fork	32 15 3	DND	DND	DND	Civic/Inst. Higher Ed Multifamily	30% 20% 20%
HKS 222 S Main St Salt Lake City, UT 84101	801-532-2393 hksinc.com	1999	Emir Tursic Partner/Office Director 22	Astra Tower - Salt Lake City McKay-Dee Medical Office Building - Ogden	30 14 14	DND	DND	DND	Civic/Inst. Healthcare Resort/Hosp.	60% 17% 16%
Architecture Belgique 7583 S Main St # 100 Midvale, UT 84047	801-561-1333 archbelgique.com	2003	Guillaume Belgique President 23	The Gauge - Salt Lake City Jordan Valley Station - West Jordan	18 2	DND	DND	DND	Multifamily Comm/Retail	90% 10%
Lloyd Archiitects 573 E 600 S Salt Lake City, UT 84102	801-328-3245 lloyd-arch.com	2000	Warren Lloyd Founding Partner & Principal 26	Cottonwood House - Holladay Shelter Hill - Eden	16 8 2	DND	DND	DND	Other Resort/Hosp. Comm/Retail	60% 20% 20%
KMA Architects 170 North Main St Spanish Fork, UT 84660	801-377-5062 kmaarchiects.com	1996	Wes Christensen President/Principal Architect 20	Springville High School - Springville Springville High School Field House - Springville	12 2	DND	DND	DND	K-12 Sports/Rec Office	80% 10% 5%
TSA Architects 1486 S 1100 E Salt Lake City, UT 84105	801-463-7108 tsa-usa.com	1996	Nathan Murray Design Principal/President 14	New ER, VA Salt Lake Medical Center - Salt Lake City Utah State Veterans Home - West Valley City	11 5	DND	DND	DND	Healthcare Higher Ed Other	70% 15% 15%
Jacoby Architects 425 S 400 E Salt Lake City, UT 84111	801-363-1434 jacobyarchitects.com	1976	Joe Jacoby Owner, Director of Design 21	Weber | Blackstone Corporate Headquarters - Providence Ogden-Weber Technical College, Pathway Building - Ogden	10 4 1	DND	DND	DND	Higher Ed Comm/Retail Healthcare	50% 20% 15%
Line 29 Architecture 14253 Morning Light Dr Herriman, UT 84096	801-822-3271 line29architecture.com	2019	Eric Hansen Principle/Owner 7	EntryNOTE - Salt Lake City TBD	4 2 2	DND	DND	DND	Resort/Hosp. Multifamily Office	70% 25% 5%

(16%), **Lloyd** (20%), and Line 29 (70%).

Civic/Institutional is also an active market for many firms, led by Method (15%), Nexus (11%), CORE (25%), Babcock (15%), EDA (42%), WPA (17%), Galloway (78%), ajc (30%), and HKS (60%).

In the Healthcare arena, top firms include Nexus (54%), MHTN (19%), TSA (70%), HKS (17%), MINT (10%), and Jacoby (15%).

Industrial was a top revenue market for three firms: AE Urbia (50%), CLH (50%), and di'velept (28%).

Office proved it's still a viable market for several firms, including FFKR (19%), AE Urbia (20%), Babcock (15%), EDA (22%), Beecher Walker (15%), and WPA (19%),

Religious design remains a top market for two of the seven firms: FFKR (24%) and NWL (30%).

Solhavn Apartments (courtesy FFKR Architects)

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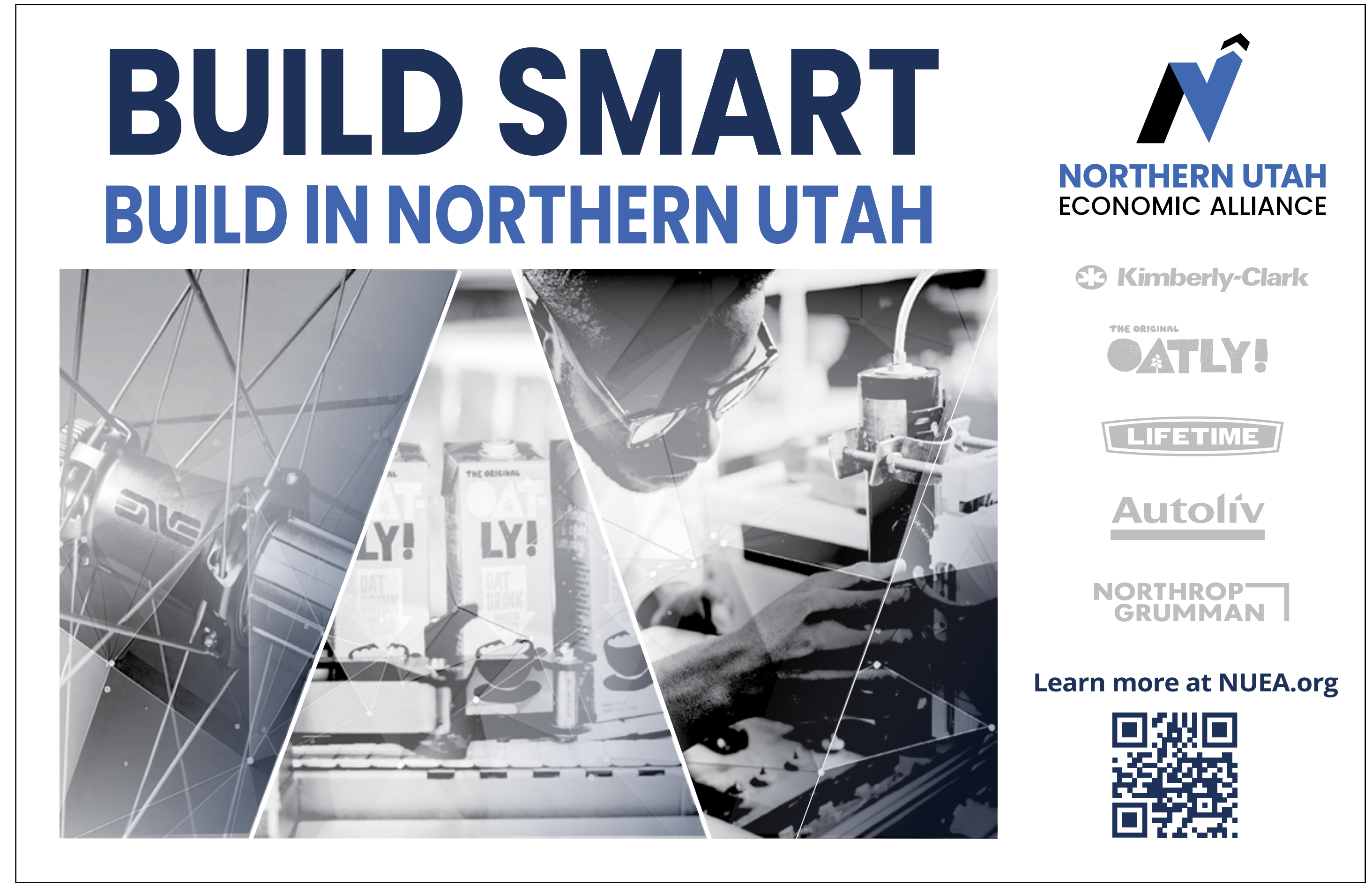
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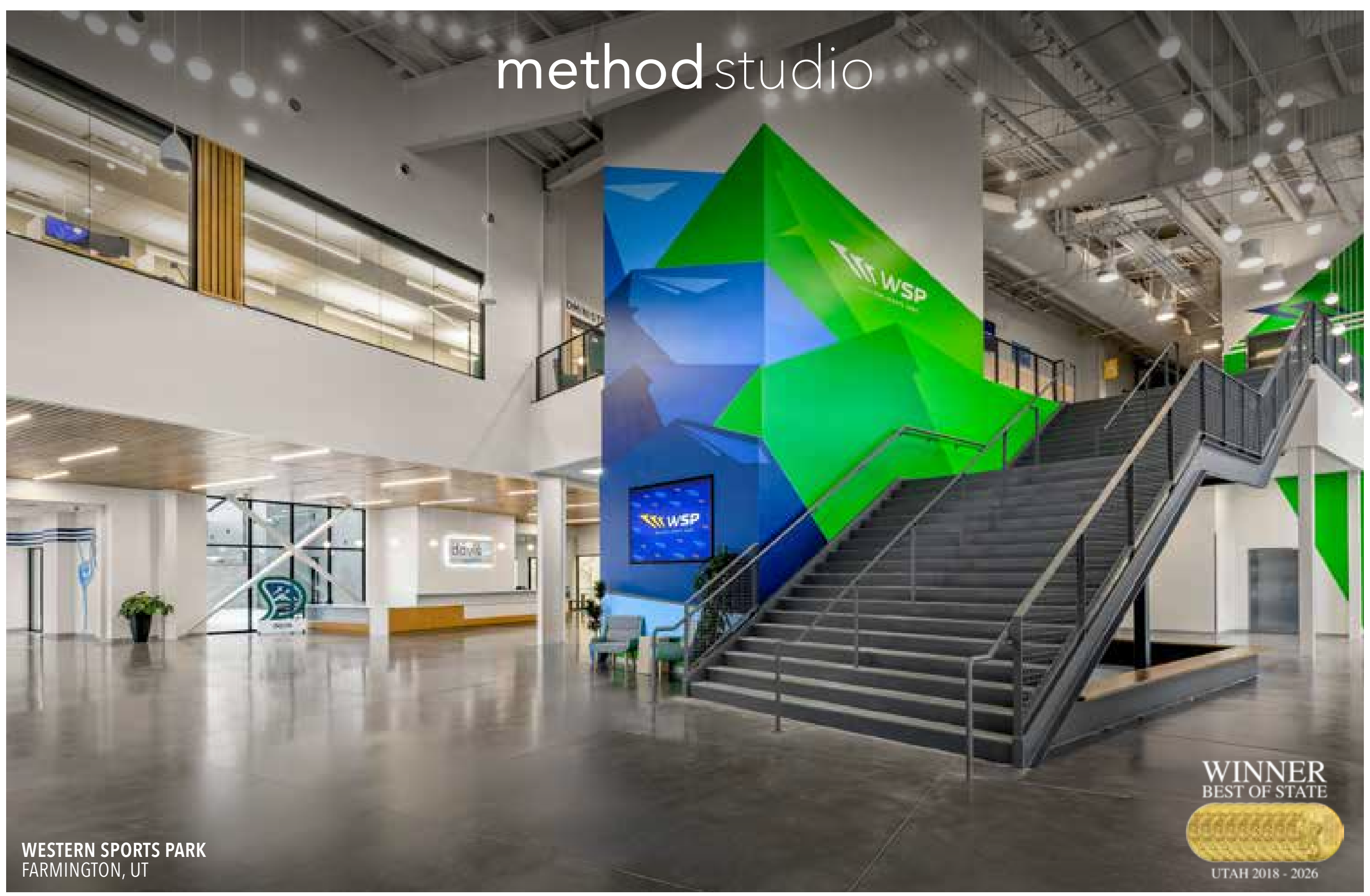
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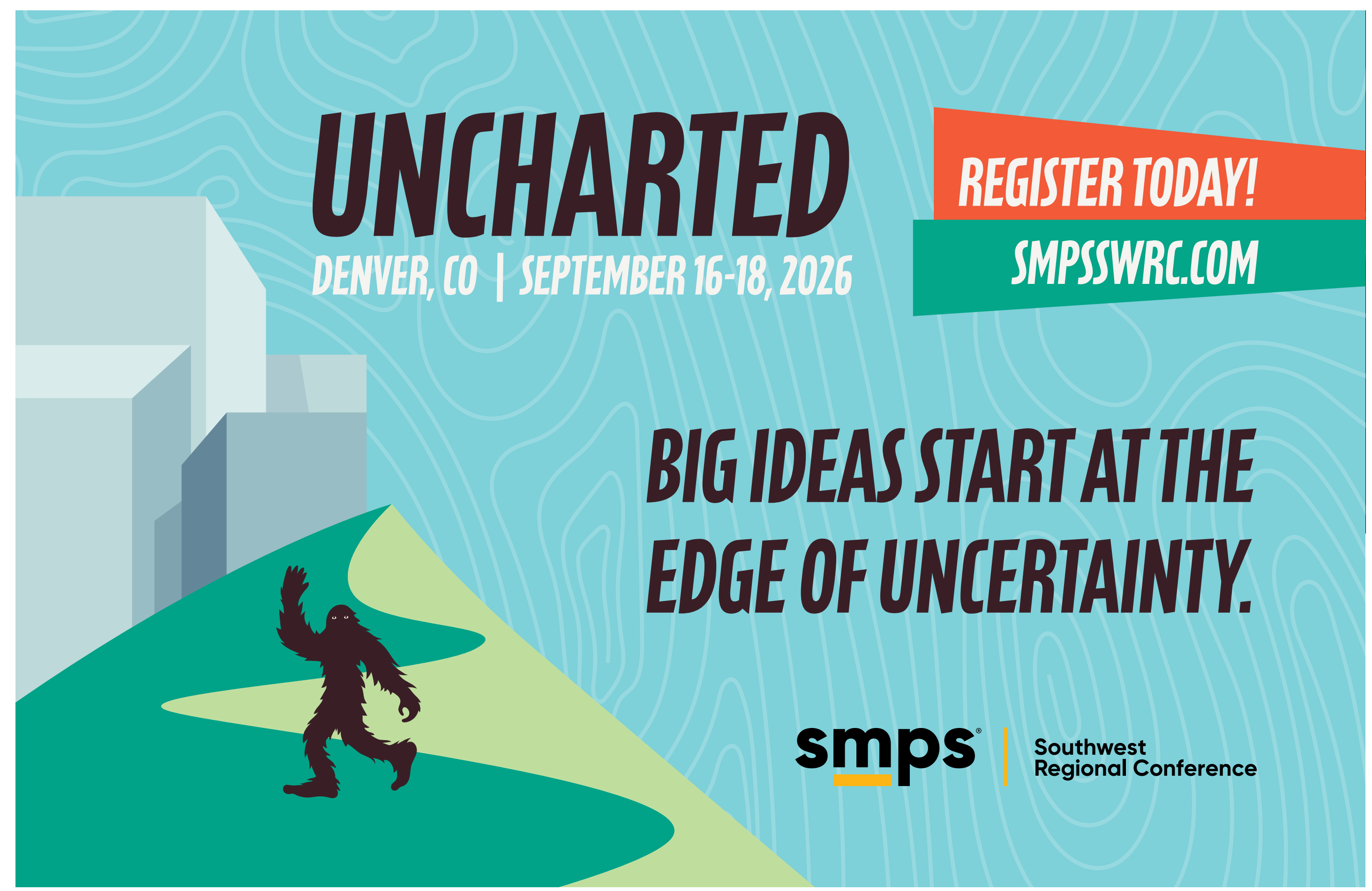
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