

CONSTRUCTION 2026 *Strong*



**Salem's Center Street Bridge
prepares for seismic upgrades**

**Oregon's State Capitol Building undergoes a
\$597-million renovation**

Salem's 50-year-old city hall gets a \$43-million lifeline

In this issue

- 3** Message from the president of the Salem Contractors Exchange, Robert Miller
- 4** Message from the executive director of the Salem Contractors Exchange, Lori Cooley
- 5** SCE Board of Directors
- 6** About the SCE
- 7** SCE benefits
- 8** Meet the SCE staff
- 10** A stronger health plan for contractors: Introducing CBIT
- 11** Blueprints, brews, and business: In Salem, a hard-hat happy hour is quietly reshaping how contractors do business
- 14** Boots, buckles, and building excellence: The SCE honors its best
- 18** Building bridges: How Meet the Prime is reshaping the construction landscape in the Mid-Willamette Valley
- 20** Building together: How Salem's NAWIC chapter is quietly shaping the future of construction
- 22** Raising the capitol: The Oregon State Capitol building gets a \$597-million renovation
- 26** Salem's 50-year-old city hall gets a \$43-million lifeline
- 28** Retrofitting a lifeline: Salem's Center Street Bridge prepares for seismic upgrades
- 30** 25 years of Rich Duncan Construction

Index to advertisers

Anderson Roofing Co., Inc.....	4
ARG Industrial.....	5
Blue Spruce Builders Inc.	21
Huggins Insurance Services, Inc.....	3
Lindberg Pipe & Grade (LPG).....	31
Mike's Heating & Air Conditioning	16
Owen Construction, Inc.....	4
Premier Propane, Inc.....	13
Thomas Kay Flooring & Interiors.....	19
Wilson Surveying Inc., dba Barker Surveying.....	7

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A message from the president of the Salem Contractors Exchange **Robert Miller**

It is truly an honor to serve as president of the Salem Contractors Exchange (SCE) and to be part of a community built on strong relationships, shared values, and a commitment to excellence in our industry.

My connection to this industry—and to this community—runs deep. My father, Ben Miller, started our family business in 1958 here in the Salem-Keizer area. He worked closely with local contractors, building not only projects but lasting relationships rooted in trust and integrity. Many of you may be familiar with the Ben Miller Family Park, which stands today as a tribute to his legacy and the impact he had on our community. Growing up in that environment shaped my understanding of hard work, accountability, and the importance of supporting one another.

Building on those foundations, I went on to establish KARM Safety Solutions alongside my partners—another family-run business dedicated to helping organizations create safer, more efficient workplaces. After spending time working within a large corporation, I saw the value of combining real-world experience with practical solutions. Our team brings together diverse expertise, allowing us to support businesses not just with compliance, but with building a true culture of safety at every level.

Serving as president of the Salem Contractors Exchange is something I take great pride in. This organization plays a vital role in connecting contractors, strengthening local businesses, and creating opportunities for growth across our region. The relationships formed here are invaluable, and I am committed to continuing the exchange's legacy of collaboration, support, and progress.

The Salem Contractors Exchange also offers a wide range of additional services and resources designed to support our members' success. I encourage you to take

full advantage of everything available. Please feel free to reach out to our new executive director or any of our staff members for complete details on how we can support your business.

I am grateful for the opportunity to serve and to carry forward my family's tradition of giving back to this industry. Together, through strong partnerships and shared knowledge, we can continue to build safer job sites, stronger businesses, and a thriving community.

Thank you for your continued support and involvement. 

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A message from the executive director of the Salem Contractors Exchange **Lori Cooley**

After 21 years with the Salem Contractors Exchange (SCE), Kay Evans retired at the end of 2025. Her dedication and leadership have left a lasting impact on this organization, and hopefully many of you had the chance to wish her well as she began this next chapter.

My own journey with the exchange began in 2008 in the copy room, back when large rolls of blueprints arrived daily and were carefully scanned in (no shortage of time on your feet in those days!). Over the past 18 years, I've had the opportunity to learn every facet of this organization and what it takes to keep the SCE strong and relevant. From welcoming new members to supporting those who have been with us for years, from embracing evolving technology to building meaningful community partnerships, each piece plays a role in ensuring the exchange continues to serve our industry for the next 75 years and beyond. I am truly honored and grateful to serve as your executive director.

Each year brings new opportunities and challenges to the construction industry. Technology evolves, seasoned professionals retire, and economic conditions shift. Through it all, our members continue to adapt, persevere, and make a lasting impact in the communities you serve.

That resilience is what makes this organization so strong.

Last summer, the SCE launched a new monthly Building Partners event. This casual gathering has quickly become a valuable addition to our construction community, bringing together professionals from across Oregon. Whether you arrive in boots or suits, the goal is the same—connection, collaboration, and conversation. Thank you to everyone who has attended and to the companies that have supported these events.

I'd also like to recognize the dedication of our board of directors. Their time, insight, and commitment, on top of their already demanding careers, help guide the exchange forward and ensure we continue to grow and evolve.

Finally, thank you to our SCE staff. With more than 30 years of combined experience, their knowledge, professionalism, and dedication make this organization what it is today.

Thank you for your continued support during my first year as executive director. I look forward to building on this foundation together and continuing to serve you in the years ahead. ✂

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About Salem Contractors Exchange



Salem Contractors Exchange (SCE) is a member-owned, full-service plan center serving contractors throughout Oregon and Southwest Washington. We provide access to projects from federal, state, and local agencies, as well as architects, engineers, and general contractors.

Our team uploads and manages project information on our website, including addenda, plan holders lists, and bid results, helping contractors stay informed and competitive throughout the bidding process.

In addition to plan services, SCE offers large-format printing, vinyl banners, waterproof and tear-resistant paper, color copies, employee handbook reproduction, and job closeout manuals.

SCE also sponsors a health insurance association marketed as CBIT, helping members access more affordable health insurance options for their businesses and employees.

Educational opportunities are offered each spring and fall, with classes ranging from first aid and CPR to plan reading, marketing, and investing — providing valuable resources

for professionals at every level of the construction industry.

Throughout the year, the SCE hosts several major events that bring the construction community together, including:

- Membership Meeting (January)
- Meet the Prime (February)
- Awards Banquet (April)
- Golf Tournament (May)
- Barbecue & Cornhole Tournament (September)

These events create valuable opportunities for networking, relationship building, and industry engagement.

On the first Tuesday of every month, the SCE hosts a Building Partners networking event at a local venue, giving construction professionals a relaxed setting to connect and build lasting business relationships. 



Benefits

Our membership doesn't cost – it pays

The Salem Contractors Exchange (SCE) is comprised of general contractors, subcontractors, and suppliers serving the construction industry. Any company associated in commercial construction is eligible for membership. Applications must be completed through forms provided by the SCE.

Level 1 Membership - Limited Online Access (\$490/year + \$100 Initiation Fee)*

Level 1 members have full voting privileges in the association. Benefits also allows members access to the Plan Center and its web content, which includes descriptions of all projects in the Plan Center, and the ability to view and download table of contents, plan holder lists, and addenda. Level 1 members will not be able to view and download plans and specs. Level 1 members are eligible to participate in the SCE Employee Welfare Benefit Plan provided it meets the plan's definition of a Qualified Construction Industry Employer. **

Level 2 Membership - Full Online Access (\$800/year + \$100 Initiation Fee)*

Level 2 members have full voting privileges in the association. In addition to Level 1 privileges, Level 2 members will have the ability to view and download plans and specs online, at no additional cost. Level 2 members are eligible to participate in the SCE Employee Welfare Benefit Plan provided it meets the plan's definition of a Qualified Construction Industry Employer. **

Associate Member (\$300/year + \$50 Initiation Fee)*

Associate members are firms who do not make bids on

construction or materials and are interested solely in information provided by the association. As an associate member, you will receive a weekly newsletter and have the ability to advertise in the newsletter and on our website. Membership does not allow access to detailed projects online or at the exchange, voting privileges, or eligibility to participate in the SCE Employee Welfare Benefit Plan.

* Initiation fee is a one-time fee, as long as members do not let their membership expire.

** Eligible groups must meet the plan's definition of a Qualified Construction Industry Employer to participate. If your company is 1) licensed as a State Authorized Contractor, 2) identifies as being within the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) System range of 1500 -1799, and 3) an approved Level 1 member in good standing with the association, then you may qualify. Association members not meeting the plan's definition are not eligible to participate. 

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Meet the SCE staff!



Behind every blueprint, bid, and project that moves through Salem Contractors Exchange (SCE) is a team of dedicated people who show up every day and get the job done. From farm kids to first responders, the SCE staff brings a wealth of diverse experience, grit, and heart to everything they do.

Get to know the faces behind the organization and the stories that brought them here.



Lori Cooley – Executive Director

Lori Cooley grew up on a farm in northeast Salem alongside seven siblings, where hard work was simply part of everyday life. From driving equipment to helping with manual labor in the family's flower and grass seed operations, she learned early the value of dedication and teamwork.

Before joining the SCE, Cooley worked in bookkeeping for a manufacturing company until it was sold. She then came to the SCE, starting in the copy room where every blueprint and specification that came through the door was carefully scanned and organized.

Over the years, Cooley's leadership and commitment helped her grow into the role of office manager, and in 2026, she stepped into the position of executive director. Today, with more than 18 years of experience at the SCE, Cooley continues to lead with the same strong work ethic and hands-on approach that shaped her from the beginning.

The background of the advertisement is a photograph of a modern interior space. It features a yellow armchair, a black metal shelving unit with various decorative items, and a large potted plant. The floor is light-colored wood.

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Kristi Schurter – Office Manager

Kristi Schurter grew up on a farm in Silverton as the middle child among 15 siblings. From an early age, she learned the value of hard work through manual labor and seasonal fruit picking, experiences that helped shape her strong work ethic and practical approach to leadership.

Driven by a passion for helping others, Schurter volunteered with the Marion County Fire Department as a home responder before earning her EMT certification. She then spent several years working for a local ambulance company, gaining valuable experience in emergency response, teamwork, and patient care.

Schurter joined the SCE in 2016, starting in the copy room while continuing to work part-time as an EMT. Over the years, her dedication and organizational skills helped her grow into her current role as office manager, where she oversees the Plan Center and supports the daily operations of the team.



Lola Tyson – Copy Room Assistant

Lola Tyson grew up in Oregon with her two siblings and spent much of her childhood playing outside in the neighborhood with local kids, building the strong sense of community and connection she still values today.

She began her career working at Kentucky Fried Chicken before moving into in-home daycare. Later, she started with the Salem-Keizer School District as a crossing guard at Grant Elementary School and gradually transitioned into office administration. Over the course of 30 years with the district, Tyson developed the customer service and organizational skills that would become a hallmark of her career.

Those experiences ultimately led her to the SCE, where she now works in the copy room. With three years at the SCE, Tyson continues to bring warmth, reliability, and exceptional customer service to the team every day.



Anastasia Alagoz – Office Assistant

Anastasia Alagoz grew up in a small town in Alberta, Canada alongside her younger twin brothers. She later went on to live and work on her grandparent's cattle farm raking and baling hay along with other various farm chores, which helped her develop a strong work ethic, adaptability, and an appreciation for teamwork from an early age.

For four seasons, Alagoz operated a delimeter, gaining hands-on experience in physically demanding work and learning the importance of precision, responsibility, and consistency on the job.

After meeting her husband, Alagoz moved to the United States in 2022. She worked at Boones Ferry Berry Farm for three years before joining the SCE in October 2025. Today, she serves as an office assistant, where she brings dedication, reliability, and a strong team-oriented mindset to her role every day. 



A stronger health plan for contractors: Introducing CBIT

The Salem Contractors Exchange (SCE) has always been about helping commercial contractors succeed. Now, there's a new reason to take advantage of your SCE membership: The Contractors & Builders Insurance Trust (CBIT).

As of May 1, 2026, two longstanding Oregon health insurance programs – the Contractors Benefit Exchange (CBX) and the Building Industry Insurance Trust (BIIT) – have officially merged to form CBIT. This move opens the door to better benefits for you and your employees.

What the merger means for SCE members

The Salem Contractors Exchange is a co-sponsoring association of the newly formed CBIT, which means SCE members have direct access to the program. By combining the membership pools, CBIT creates a larger group of enrolled companies negotiating together as one. That increased scale translates into real advantages for your business:

- Potential savings of 20 percent or more compared to other market plans
- More carrier options giving employers the power of choice
- Broader coverage networks across Oregon and Southwest Washington

More carriers, more choices

CBIT offers medical plans through three of the top carriers in the region: Regence BlueCross BlueShield of Oregon, Providence Health Plan, and Kaiser Permanente

Northwest. Between them, you're covered at 97 percent of hospitals nationwide. Beyond medical, CBIT provides a comprehensive benefits package under one roof:

- Dental and vision through Ameritas
- Life insurance and AD&D through USAble Life (all medical plans include a \$25,000 Basic Life and AD&D policy, with the option to increase coverage up to \$100,000)
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP) through CuraLinc
- Health Savings Accounts (HSAs) through HealthEquity

Built for the construction industry

CBIT was designed specifically for contractors and offers competitive benefits with plan designs made for companies in our industry. The program is open to companies with as few as two enrolled employees, making it accessible to the small- and mid-sized businesses that make up the backbone of commercial contracting in our region.

All members are encouraged to look at a free quote

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Blueprints, brews, and business

In Salem, a hard-hat happy hour is quietly reshaping how contractors do business



Building Partners is a monthly networking event launched in July 2025 by the Salem Contractors Exchange.

On the first Tuesday of every month, somewhere between a brewery tap handle and the hum of industry small talk, something unusual happens in Salem. Plumbers meet low-voltage electricians. Project managers swap software tips with general contractors. Subcontractors who have passed each other on job sites for years finally learn each other's names. The occasion is Building Partners, a monthly networking event launched in July 2025 by the Salem Contractors Exchange, and it may be the most consequential, if least-heralded, development in the region's commercial construction community in years.

The event was born out of a question that the Salem Contractors Exchange (SCE) was seeing: how could smaller companies actually

Attendance typically runs between 30 and 50 people, drawn from across Oregon, and thanks to generous sponsors, the first drink is complimentary.

meet and connect with others in the commercial construction industry? Broader networking events existed across Salem, but none were tailored specifically to this world of bids, bonds, and blueprints.

With the help of SCE board member Dan Klobes, a strategic account manager for United Rentals, the SCE filled the gap. The format is intentionally unpretentious. Attendees begin arriving around 3:30 p.m. At 4 p.m. the room does a round of structured introductions. A guest speaker offers a five-to-10-minute talk on an industry topic, sponsors introduce their businesses, and then the floor opens. The event officially ends at 5 p.m., though the conversations rarely do. Attendance typically runs between 30 and 50 people, drawn from across Oregon, and thanks to generous sponsors, the first drink is complimentary.

Crucially, Building Partners is open to anyone working in commercial construction, regardless of whether they hold membership in the SCE. That deliberate inclusivity, organizers say, is not just a policy detail, it shapes the entire character of the room.

Adam Jenkins, president of Low Voltage Northwest and an SCE board member, says the approach matters precisely because it removes the transactional pressure that can make traditional networking feel like a sales call.



"We want anyone who's doing work in this community to be there," says Jenkins. "To have those conversations, figure out what can we do to help you, what can you do to help us."

For Jenkins, the event has yielded concrete results: new partnerships with electrical contractors, opportunities to bid on projects, and a growing sense of recognition in a market where his company had been working in relative obscurity. He noted that similar gatherings simply do not exist in Eugene or Portland, where his company also operates.

"I don't see anyone doing stuff like this specifically for construction," he says.

The event's reach has extended beyond the commercial trades themselves. Mark Atkinson, director of curriculum at Instruction Construction, a construction-focused educational program, began attending in search of opportunities to connect his students with working professionals. What he found changed how his program teaches.

"Every time I go, there's somebody saying, this is what we'd like to see in an employee," says Atkinson.

The conversations have led electricians and plumbers to conduct hands-on workshops for his students. Instruction, he argues, that carries more weight coming from someone still wearing a tool belt. He has also appreciated the rotating venues, which have introduced him to corners of Salem and the Willamette Valley he might never have otherwise visited.

Building Partners has been held at a series of local spots – Ratchet Brewery hosted from January through April, with May's event moving to Tsunami Taproom. The locations shift periodically, announced through social media, keeping the format fresh while reinforcing a commitment to supporting local businesses.

Organizers are candid that what sets the event apart is less the format than the feeling. Unlike larger industry conferences or general-



Building Partners is open to anyone working in commercial construction, regardless of whether they hold membership in the SCE.

purpose chamber events, Building Partners is intentionally small enough that attendees begin to recognize one another month after month. That familiarity, they say, is the point. Relationships built over several visits tend to run deeper than those forged in a single evening, and it is those relationships – knowing who to call, knowing who can be trusted – that ultimately shape who gets the work.

Klobes, who helped launch the event and has watched it grow steadily since, says the calculus for any contractor on the fence is simple.

“It is only 1.5 hours of your day, once a month,” says Klobes. “There is a good chance you earn more work and save yourself time in the estimation process by increasing your odds of winning work.” ✂

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The Salem Contractors Exchange honors its best

The chandeliers may have been strung with lasso rope and the emcees dressed for the frontier, but the work celebrated on April 25 was anything but rustic.

The Salem Contractors Exchange (SCE) welcomed more than 100 guests to its annual Awards Banquet in Lincoln City, reimagined this year as a Wild West affair. With

themed activities and a lively atmosphere, the evening balanced fun with a deeper purpose: recognizing the professionals shaping the commercial construction environment across the state.

Emceed by Scott Erickson and Dan Klobes, the program featured awards across multiple trades, alongside raffles,



The Salem Contractors Exchange (SCE) welcomed more than 100 guests to its annual Awards Banquet in Lincoln City, reimagined this year as a Wild West affair.

auctions, and two Lifetime Achievement awards that drew the night's most heartfelt applause.

Recognizing excellence across the trades

Fourteen divisions were judged on craftsmanship, problem-solving, and project impact.

In landscaping, Melissa Mitchell of Green Acres Landscape was recognized for a Chick-fil-A project in Lake Oswego, navigating strict regulations while integrating new planting with existing vegetation.

Low Voltage NW (LVNW) earned two awards. Its LVNW Crew was honored in safety and security for work at Jory Behavioral Health, implementing advanced systems designed to enhance safety without disrupting a therapeutic environment. The company also won in communications for the Advanced Recovery System project, maintaining exceptional cable management in an active renovation site.

Electrical honors went to Merv Zook of Nice Electric for the OAWU Training Center, where cost-saving engineering solutions kept the project within budget. Jet Industries received HVAC recognition for a Chick-fil-A project requiring multiple ductwork redesigns, ultimately relocating systems to the roof.

In plumbing, Willy Verbort of II-S Mechanical was recognized for SKSD Kitchens BP#3, keeping a complex multi-kitchen project on schedule through proactive planning.

The finishes award went to the Caslin Crew of Caslin, Inc. for the Polk County Behavioral Health Building, delivering a demanding Level 5 wall finish alongside detailed ceiling and wood installations.

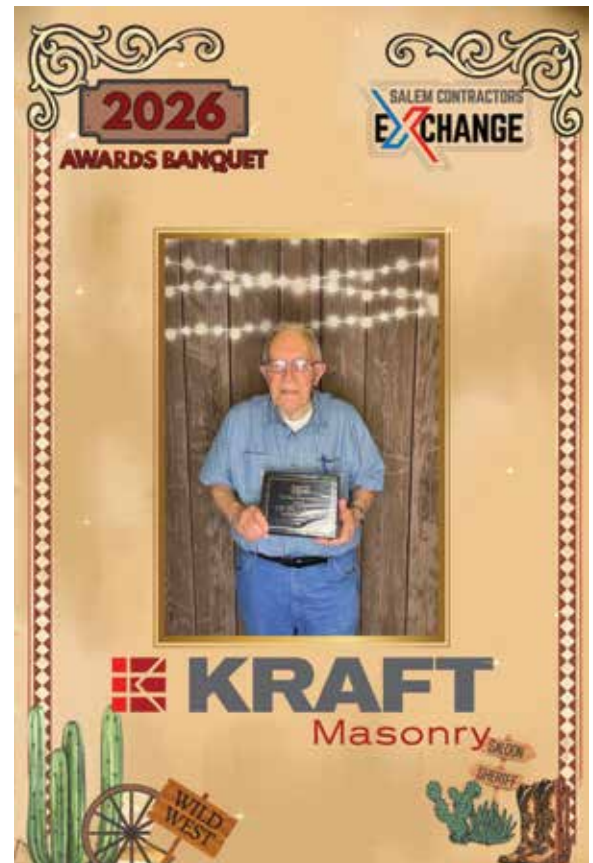
Flooring honors went to Rich Clausen of Thomas Kay Flooring Interiors for the OAWU Training Center.

One of the evening's standout projects came in openings and glass. Jeff Toth of Black Line Glazing was recognized for his work on the Oregon State Capitol, a complex, large-scale project involving custom bronze and glass installations described as a "once-in-a-lifetime job."

Additional winners included Jason Liane of Santiam Heating and Sheet Metal for a challenging roofing project at Tillamook Bay



Lifetime Achievement recipient Tori Klages, co-founder of B&T Striping and Curbing, was recognized for building a successful company from the ground up over 26 years.



Lifetime Achievement recipient CW (Bill) Hansen of CJ Hansen Co. Inc. was recognized for his dedication to the mechanical industry.

Community College; John Hendricks of Caslin, Inc. for extensive work on SKSD Kitchens BP#3; Ray Feskens of Kraft Masonry for precision work on a downtown Eugene development; and Jim Douglas of Salem Concrete Paving for tying new foundations into an 80-year-old church structure.

General contractor awards

Top honors for general contractors reflected the range of project sizes and complexity.

In the \$5 million-plus category, Rich Duncan Construction was recognized for a nearly 8,000-square-foot Chick-fil-A in Lake Oswego, featuring detailed restoration work and custom interior elements.

The \$2- to \$5-million award went to CD Redding Construction for the Anacreon Tasting House near Newberg, a vineyard project requiring precise structural work on a steep site.

For projects under \$2 million, White Oak Construction was honored for an addition to St. Timothy's Episcopal Church, blending modern functionality with historic character.

The People's Choice Award went to Blue Spruce Builders for the OAWU Training Center.

Lifetime Achievement recipients

The evening's most meaningful moments came with two Lifetime Achievement Awards.

Tori Klages, co-founder of B&T Striping and Curbing, was recognized for building a successful company from the ground up over 26 years. From managing operations to working in the field and earning her commercial driver's license, Klages played a hands-on role in every aspect of the business. As she prepares to retire, the industry paused to acknowledge her impact.

CW (Bill) Hansen of CJ Hansen Co., Inc. received the Lifetime Achievement Award for mechanical contracting. Taking over the family business in 1971, Hansen guided the company through multiple economic downturns while maintaining a strong workforce and reputation for quality. His work spans major industrial, institutional, and community projects across the region, alongside longstanding civic involvement.

The Salem Contractors Exchange extended its thanks to presenting sponsor CBIT and the many supporters who made the evening possible. As the cowboy hats are set aside for another year, the legacy of craftsmanship and dedication recognized that night endures. 

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Building bridges

How Meet the Prime is reshaping the construction landscape in the Mid-Willamette Valley



Meet the Prime launched in 2025.



Meet the Prime is designed to level a playing field that has long tilted toward the familiar.



For subcontractors, the event offers something equally rare: direct, unhurried access to the region's general contractors all under one roof.

It started, as many good ideas do, with a phone call and a problem worth solving. Lori Cooley, executive director of the Salem Contractors Exchange (SCE), saw something missing in the local construction ecosystem: a dedicated space where subcontractors and general contractors could find each other, talk candidly, and lay the groundwork for the kind of relationships that actually get projects built. From that observation, Meet the Prime was born.

The inaugural event in 2025 exceeded every expectation.

"The first Meet the Prime had a great turnout, which honestly surprised me in the best way," says Angie

Porter, controller at CD Redding Construction and an SCE board member.

If the first year was a proof of concept, the 2026 edition was a statement of intent. Participation surged, drawing contractors from across the valley and the greater metro area, a geographic expansion that signaled the event had outgrown its origins as a local experiment and matured into a regional institution.

"There were so many more participants from all across the valley and metro area, which really showed how much the event has grown in such a short time," says Porter.

At its core, Meet the Prime is designed to level a playing field

that has long tilted toward the familiar. General contractors, under the pressure of deadlines and budgets, naturally gravitate toward subcontractors they already know. The result is a self-reinforcing cycle that can leave smaller or lesser-known firms on the outside – not because of the quality of their work, but simply because they haven't had the right introduction.

"The main goal is to create opportunities for smaller or lesser-known subs and suppliers to connect with local general contractors," Porter says. "We are always looking to add qualified subs to our pool, so events like this are incredibly valuable."

For subcontractors, the event offers something equally rare: direct, unhurried access to the region's general contractors all under one roof. Adam Jenkins, president of Low Voltage Northwest and an SCE board member, says the format is unlike anything else available to subs in the region.

"Meet the Prime is one of the best networking events in our region because it brings so many general contractors to one place," says Jenkins. "This gives subcontractors like us rare chances to have one-on-one conversations with GCs that we don't normally get."

Jenkins used this year's event to personally introduce a new job site security rental program – an AI-powered monitoring solution he was eager to bring to the attention of general contractors he'd worked with before, but who didn't yet know about the offering.

The SCE has long understood that its role extends beyond administrative

membership. By hosting Meet the Prime alongside its monthly Building Partners event, the organization has positioned itself as an active steward of the Mid-Willamette Valley construction community.

"SCE plays an important role in fostering relationships that strengthen and support the Mid-Willamette Valley construction community," Porter observes.

Jenkins echoed the sentiment, noting that the event's value lies in its ability to compress months of scheduling and phone tag into a single, high-yield morning.

"Everyone is so busy," says Jenkins. "This event lets subcontractors go to one place for a couple of hours and have so much value seeing every general contractor that does work in this area."

For first-timers, both Jenkins and Porter offer advice that is simple but strategic. Jenkins counsels patience as popular booths draw crowds, and waiting for the right moment to



By hosting Meet the Prime alongside its monthly Building Partners event, the organization has positioned itself as an active steward of the Mid-Willamette Valley construction community.

approach a GC is better than rushing a first impression. Porter's advice cuts even more directly to the heart of what the event is about.

"Stop and talk to everyone. Even if you don't think a particular GC can use your services, you never know when an opportunity could come up where they might," she says. "Building relationships and making connections is what events like this are all about." 



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Building together

How Salem's NAWIC chapter is quietly shaping the future of construction

NAWIC members have participated in the shed build following the Santiam Canyon fires.

In an industry long defined by hard hats and harder norms, a small but determined group of women have been meeting quietly on the third Wednesday of every month at Broadway Commons in Salem, Oregon. They are project managers, office administrators, tradeswomen, and business owners. Some found construction by accident. Others were born into it. But all of them found something in Chapter 198 of the National Association of Women in

Construction (NAWIC) that they could not find anywhere else.

Established in 1972, the Salem chapter of NAWIC traces its roots to a movement that began in 1953, when 16 women in Fort Worth, Texas, decided the industry had no place for them, and built one anyway. More than 70 years later, the organization has grown into a national network of chapters, regional conferences, and professional development programs. The Salem chapter, modest in size

but rich in purpose, has quietly embedded itself into the fabric of the local construction community.

Tracy Stewart, the chapter's current president and an office administrator at AG Sadowski Company, describes the chapter's appeal in straightforward terms.

"The comradery, the support, we're here to support each other and grow together," says Stewart.

Monthly meetings feature guest



NAWIC's Salem Chapter has a steady presence at Construction Career Day each April, where high school students are introduced to an industry that doesn't require a four-year degree to enter.

speakers drawn from the industry and beyond: an insurance and bonding expert, representatives from the Salem Chamber of Commerce, and this spring, two women from Riverbend, whose company actively supports its female employees. The programming is practical, the tone collegial, the ambition genuine.

Beyond the conference room, the chapter has made its mark through action. Members have participated in the shed build following the Santiam Canyon fires, helped coordinate renovations at Taylor's House — a teen homeless shelter in Salem — and have been a steady presence at Construction Career Day each April, where high school students are introduced to an industry that doesn't require a four-year degree to enter. In recent years, six to eight high school students have signed on as student members, attending meetings and lending hands at events.

Dawn Killough came to construction through a temp agency in the 1990s, landed a receptionist role at a mechanical contractor, and was almost immediately handed a project manager's responsibilities. She

joined the Salem chapter in 2014 and eventually served as both treasurer and president. She credits NAWIC with giving her something that proved decisive years later, when she felt her career had stalled and chose to launch a freelance construction writing business.

"I had more confidence in my skills and my abilities as a result of that experience," says Killough.

Both Stewart and Killough acknowledge that women in

construction still face a long road. Recognition remains elusive. Ceilings, formal and informal, persist. Yet membership is growing, driven largely by word of mouth and the simple, radical act of showing up for one another.

"They need to find some support," Killough says of women entering the industry today. "If they don't find support where they are, then they need to keep looking until they find it, because it's very difficult to walk the walk alone." 



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Raising the Capitol



After decades of deferred dreams, a \$597-million renovation has placed Oregon's iconic statehouse on seismic isolators, restored its historic grandeur, and prepared it for another generation of government

By Shayna Wiwierski

The Oregon State Capitol project was one of the most technically ambitious construction projects in Oregon history.

The gold-leafed bronze pioneer atop Oregon's Capitol dome had, over decades, begun to show his age. Oxidation and exposure to the elements had worn the gold leaf thin, a quiet deterioration unfolding high above a building that was itself carrying the weight of deferred maintenance, outdated mechanical systems, clay tile walls, and seismic vulnerabilities that state officials had identified as early as the late 1990s. For years, the vision of a full-scale renovation sat on paper, too expensive and too sweeping to act upon. Then, slowly, phase by phase, it began.

What followed was one of the most technically ambitious construction projects in Oregon history. A three-phase, nearly \$600-million renovation of the Oregon State Capitol that involved lifting the 1938 building off its foundation, excavating more than a dozen feet below its basement, and installing a seismic isolation system capable of keeping the structure standing while the earth moves

beneath it. The project, managed by Portland-based Hoffman Construction Company, reached substantial completion in February of this year, with exterior improvements and landscaping expected to wrap up by December 2026.

"It was probably one of the most technically challenging jobs I've worked on in my 36 years in the business," says Kevin Cady, project manager at Hoffman Construction, who has been attached to the Capitol project for close to five years.

The groundwork for the renovation was laid formally in 2008, when the state launched what became known as the Capital Master Plan Development Project. That effort culminated in a June 2009 report identifying the full scope of what needed to be done: electrical upgrades, heating and cooling modernization, ADA-accessibility improvements, and seismic reinforcement throughout



The groundwork for the renovation was laid formally in 2008, when the state launched what became known as the Capital Master Plan Development Project.



The project was broken up into three phases.

the complex. The original plan – called the Oregon State Capital Renovation, or OSCR – envisioned closing the Capitol entirely for four to five years, constructing off-site facilities for legislative chambers and offices, and completing the work in one uninterrupted push.

“The price tag was pretty high to do the entire package,” says Cameron Haerer, project manager with the State of Oregon who has been involved in the Capitol effort since 2018. “And they decided that’s too expensive to bite off.”

Instead, the State broke the project into three phases, each funded through a combination of general obligation bonds and general funds, with no federal dollars involved. Phase 1, awarded to Hoffman in 2018, focused on building two large underground mechanical and electrical vaults on the east and west sides of the Capitol and installing new infrastructure to accommodate future systems. Total cost was \$59.9 million. Phase 2, at \$73.4 million, addressed seismic upgrades and accessibility improvements in the 1977 administrative wing. Phase 3, which was the heart of the effort, cost \$464 million and involved a full seismic isolation of the 1938 building itself.

The seismic isolation system, designed by Forell/Elsesser Engineers, Inc. of San Francisco, works through a deceptively simple principle. Roughly 700 micropiles were drilled into the ground beneath the Capitol. From those anchors, workers erected approximately six million pounds of temporary structural steel – essentially a forest of steel towers – to support the building while its original foundation was demolished. The crew then dug down 14 to

15 feet, poured new concrete mat footings, and inserted the isolators themselves: two concave steel plates with a ball bearing at the center, positioned beneath every major structural load point.

“Basically the ground would move and the building would not,” Cady says. “We built a moat all around the building to allow this movement of the earth and keep the building structurally sound.”

The Capitol sat on its temporary steel supports for four months while the permanent foundation was completed.

To reach the structure, workers first had to strip away the building’s interior finishes, which included marble wainscoting, plaster ceilings, wood paneling, and clay tile walls that dated back to the original construction. The demolition revealed surprises as prior seismic upgrades, it turned out, had not been fully completed. Additional concrete shear walls were required running up through the rotunda. Drag struts, which are horizontal steel members that allow floors to act as unified structural diaphragms, had to be added or reinforced.

“It kind of kept growing through the process because we were finding more structural inadequacies in the building,” says Cady. “And so, you got to put Humpty Dumpty back together again.”

That reassembly was itself an extraordinary exercise in historical stewardship. The project’s architectural team, led by SRG Partnership (now CanonDesign following an acquisition), worked in close coordination with the



Far left: The Capitol sat on its temporary steel supports for four months while the permanent foundation was completed. Left: On the dome, the gold-leaf covering of the bronze pioneer statue, which was worn thin by age, oxidation, and decades of exposure to the elements, was redone using gold leaf sourced from overseas, applied by a specialty subcontractor. Above: Four new hearing rooms – two on each side of what were previously below-grade courtyards – now offer modern spaces where citizens can attend legislative sessions.

Architectural Resources Group, a firm specializing in historic preservation, and with the State Historic Preservation Office. The goal was to retain as much original material as possible while meeting modern code requirements.

The travertine stone that lines much of the Capitol's interior presented a particular challenge. The original quarry in Montana had closed. A matching source was eventually located in an adjacent pit near Yellowstone National Park, where some of the stone from the original quarry had been transferred to a nearby tribal reservation and was inaccessible, but enough comparable material was found to complete the work. Pioneer Waterproofing Co. Inc. handled the stonework installation.

"We tried to do what we could to kind of call that stuff out," Haerer says of the distinction between old and new materials. In the main stairwell, a deliberate band of unfinished travertine marks the line between original stone and new installation.

The building's bronze heating grilles were salvaged and reinstalled in the main gallery. Original doors were preserved wherever possible. The rotunda's plaster, cracked and damaged over decades, was repaired entirely; paint analysis revealed the original 1938 color palette, which was considerably more vivid than what had accumulated over the years. It has now been restored. And on the dome, the gold-leaf covering of the bronze pioneer statue, which was worn thin by age, oxidation, and decades of exposure to the elements, was redone using

gold leaf sourced from overseas, applied by a specialty subcontractor.

Inside, Oregonians will find a building substantially transformed for public use. Four new hearing rooms – two on each side of what were previously below-grade courtyards – now offer modern spaces where citizens can attend legislative sessions. Those courtyards themselves have been raised to the first-floor level, opening them to natural light and foot traffic in a way that the previous basement-level spaces never permitted. A cafe that was tucked in a corner has been relocated to a central position and expanded to roughly four or five times its previous seating capacity.

ADA accessibility has been significantly improved both inside and outside the building. New ramps, sloped sidewalks, and automatic doors have been added. Wheelchair access to the legislative chambers, which had none previously, is being addressed through a careful process that works within historic preservation requirements. Water fountains and bottle-fill stations, which had been offline for years due to lead concerns traced to old solder and fixtures, have been fully replaced with new copper plumbing.

Boulders of polished black granite, with their faces shaved smooth, have been placed around the Capitol grounds, carved with Native American quotations developed in collaboration with Indigenous artists. New operable skylights have been installed, and light wells added, brightening the basement and stairwells with natural light



that had not reached those spaces before.

On the west side of the Capitol, the redesign of Wilson Park is also underway. A non-functioning fountain has been removed; a new memorial plaza with seating walls, improved paving, and a refurbished Walk of Flags is taking its place. The goal is to transform what had accumulated as a patchwork of uncoordinated memorials over decades into a coherent, walkable public space.

Mechanical systems have been upgraded throughout. The building's old steam-based heating system, which served it for decades with no cooling capability, has been replaced with a modern chilled water and hot water loop system running to perimeter fan coil units and radiant ceiling heating panels. All data, telecommunications, and security camera infrastructure has been replaced. Cherry City Electric of Salem handled electrical work; Total Mechanical Inc. of Vancouver, WA, handled the mechanical systems. Approximately 65 subcontractors in total worked on the project.

One of the most complex logistical challenges was that the Capitol could not simply close. The Oregon Legislature operates on a biennial schedule, with a six-month session in one year and a shorter session the next. Work had to be planned around those sessions, with crews coordinating temporary utilities, fire life safety systems, and security measures to allow legislators to continue functioning in the building throughout.

"We just had to work very closely with the legislature in terms of planning," Cady says. "A lot of planning went into it."



With the renovation now substantially complete, both the state and its construction partners express a sense of finality and pride about what has been accomplished. Haerer noted that state capitols are singular structures: there are only 50 in the entire country, and each one carries an obligation to represent its citizens and sustain the continuity of government. Oregon's Capitol, he says, is now positioned to do exactly that, potentially for decades to come, even in the event of a major seismic event.

"This is really a once in probably two-generations kind of a project," Haerer says. "Generations are going to come and go, and it is important to preserve the legacy of this building. There's a point where you must make an investment to do things right and not put a Band-Aid on something without really addressing the issues. The decision to fund this project preserves and restores Oregon's historic capitol building, improves its accessibility by citizens and visitors, and puts it in a good place to be a well-functioning facility for the next 40 to 50 years." 

Salem's 50-year-old city hall gets a \$43-million lifeline

A seismic retrofit and sweeping renovation aim to earthquake-proof the Oregon capital's brutalist civic hub — before the next big one hits

By Shayna Wiwierski



The centerpiece of the Salem Civic Center project is the seismic work. The addition of six reinforced concrete shear walls along the building's exterior.

When Salem voters approved a \$300 million safety and livability bond in the fall of 2022, few line items carried more symbolic weight than the roughly \$40 million set aside for the city's Civic Center. The three-story, 90,000-square-foot building, constructed in 1972 and home to everything from municipal courts to the planning department, had long been a quiet source of anxiety for the city workers who fill its halls. A major seismic event, particularly the long-anticipated Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake, could, under existing conditions, bring it down.

That anxiety is now driving one of the

most ambitious municipal renovation projects in Salem's recent history.

"There's always been some concern amongst staff members that if there was a Cascadia event or an earthquake-type event, the building would not have withstood it," says Aaron Kimsey, the city's assistant engineer overseeing the project. "Now the staff and the public know that it'll be a safe structure for years to come."

General contractor, Howard S. Wright, a Balfour Beatty company, broke ground on the project in August 2025 and is expected to wrap up in January 2027. The project is not a rebuild, but a renewal and deliberate effort

to preserve a building city officials believe still has decades of useful life. The Civic Center, along with the adjacent Salem Public Library and fire station, sits on a campus listed on the historic registry, a designation that has shaped every design decision from the color of the new concrete to the texture of the exterior walls.

The building is what architects call brutalist, a style defined by raw, exposed materials and muscular concrete forms that was fashionable in the early 1970s but has since fallen out of favor. That status as a protected landmark has meant that the design team, which includes Hacker Architects, structural engineering firm KPFF, and architecture firm CB Two Architects, has had to navigate the demands of a 21st century seismic upgrade while honoring the aesthetic language of a half-century-old structure.

"Our teammates are carefully matching existing concrete textures with new structural finishes, and staining newer concrete black to emphasize a new feature to the building," says Dan Weller, senior project manager at Howard S. Wright. "The entire project and design team is approaching the work with deep

respect to the building's original character while delivering critical seismic upgrades that will protect the structure during a major earthquake."

The centerpiece of the seismic work is the addition of six reinforced concrete shear walls along the building's exterior. Each wall runs approximately 30 feet wide, three feet deep, and up to 40 feet tall, anchored to deep footings – four of them supported by underground micropiles – and connected by steel collector plates that ring the perimeter of the building. Together, the system is designed to consolidate and redirect seismic loads during an earthquake, preventing the building from collapsing and allowing anyone inside to safely exit.

"We're matching different concrete textures that are existing with our new concrete," says Weller. "We're complementing the building by staining the new concrete black to kind of show it as a new feature to the building."

The seismic upgrades represent only one layer of what is effectively a full systems overhaul. Much of the building's infrastructure, including HVAC, plumbing, and electrical dates to original construction and has long outlived its design life. New LED lighting will be installed throughout. A new roof will be built, with solar panels added to satisfy a requirement that one-and-a-half percent of the project incorporate green energy improvements. The interior is also being reorganized to improve wayfinding, create better efficiencies within departments, and bring the office space into what



A new roof will be built, with solar panels added to satisfy a requirement that one-and-a-half percent of the project incorporate green energy improvements.

Kimsey describes as a modern-day workspace.

The City chose to pursue the project through a progressive design-build model, which is an approach that brings the contractor and architect on board at the earliest stages of design, allowing costs and risks to be assessed before shovels hit the ground. For a building of this age and complexity, that front-end collaboration proved invaluable, even if it couldn't anticipate everything.

As with many renovations of mid-century structures, unforeseen conditions emerged once demolition began, including additional asbestos and discrepancies between original drawings and existing conditions. The integrated design-build team worked collaboratively with the City to address these challenges without disrupting the overall schedule or compromising project goals.

In addition, an unexpected electrical upgrade, required by the local authority having jurisdiction, was added to the scope.

The project budget, initially set at

\$40 million from the bond, grew to approximately \$43 million after transportation, utility, and building and safety departments each contributed a share toward improvements that directly serve their operations. City officials say the investment remains far less costly than demolishing the building and starting fresh.

Groundworks is handling the landscape work on the surrounding campus, rounding out a team that has been notable, by all accounts, for its cohesion. The alignment of designers, engineers, and contractor under a single contract, which is a defining feature of the progressive design-build model, created shared accountability that helped resolve challenges quickly and kept the project from unraveling when differing site conditions proved more complicated than expected.

"It's been an extremely positive experience working with the City of Salem," Weller says. "They've been a strong partner throughout a complex renovation, allowing the team to collaboratively navigate challenges and efficiently move the project forward." 



Retrofitting a lifeline

OR 22 Center Street Bridge
over the Willamette.

Salem's Center Street Bridge prepares for seismic upgrades

By Shayna Wiwierski

The Center Street Bridge, a vital artery linking Salem and West Salem, is undergoing a major seismic retrofit designed to improve its ability to withstand the kind of earthquake long anticipated in the Pacific Northwest.

Built in stages between 1953 and 1985, the bridge reflects an era before modern seismic standards were in place. Today, engineers are working to bring the structure in line with current expectations for resilience, particularly in the event of a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake or a 1,000-year probabilistic seismic event.

"The Center Street Bridge is comprised of several different

sections built between 1953 and 1985, which did not consider modern seismic design practices," says Andrew Walker, PE, agency bridge reviewer at the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT). "Through engineering analysis, field investigations, and soil testing, we identified vulnerabilities throughout the bridge."

Those vulnerabilities are most pronounced in the bridge's foundations, which are the primary focus of the retrofit. Additional improvements will address the deck and crossbeams, bringing multiple elements of the structure into alignment with modern standards.

Conditions vary significantly

across the site. On the west side of the Willamette River, soils are susceptible to liquefaction, a phenomenon in which ground behaves like a liquid during intense shaking. Walker says that this condition requires a more extensive retrofit. That work is scheduled for a second phase of the project, while the initial phase will focus on the river crossing and east side connections.

The project is part of a broader statewide effort to strengthen critical infrastructure. OR 22, which the bridge carries, serves as a key east-west corridor connecting Salem and surrounding communities to Interstate 5.



R-22 Eastbound Center Street Bridge to downtown Salem.



Under the OR 22 Center Street Bridge.

"This project is part of Oregon's larger effort to make key transportation routes more resilient after a major earthquake," Walker says. "Strengthening this bridge will help people reconnect to emergency services, hospitals, freight routes, and other critical services after a major seismic event."

Planning for the retrofit is ongoing. Phase 1 design is expected to conclude in 2026, with construction potentially beginning as early as fall of that year, pending funding approvals and federal permits. Construction for the first phase could take up to four years, with timing influenced by environmental constraints, including restrictions on in-water work to protect fish and habitat.

"The bridge crosses the Willamette River, which means some work can only happen during limited in-water work windows each year," Walker says. "That creates tight construction timelines for certain parts of the project."

Working with an existing structure presents additional complexities. Original construction documents do not always perfectly reflect what was built, requiring contractors to adapt

as conditions are uncovered in the field.

"The construction contractor will have to adapt to the actual built conditions as they are unearthed during construction," Walker says.

The retrofit must also proceed without significantly disrupting daily life in Salem. The bridge carries one of the city's busiest routes, and maintaining access is a central priority. Walker says their goal is to keep the bridge open to traffic through most of construction. Drivers should expect lane closures, traffic shifts and occasional weekend evening closures, while pedestrian access, including for people with disabilities, will be maintained.

Unlike some projects that replace aging bridges entirely, this effort focuses on strengthening the existing structure rather than replacing it.

What sets the Center Street Bridge project apart is its scale, location, and phased approach.

"We are starting with the sections that provide the greatest benefit for emergency response and regional connections, while planning additional improvements as funding

becomes available," Walker says.

Phase 1 is estimated to cost up to \$200 million, funded through Oregon's 2017 transportation package along with federal funding and bonding. Federal authorization is still required before construction can begin.

For the Salem community, the stakes are high. The bridge is more than a transportation link; it is a potential lifeline in the aftermath of a disaster. A successful retrofit means the Center Street Bridge can continue serving as a critical lifeline after a major earthquake. It will help West Salem residents and surrounding communities maintain or restore access to emergency services, hospitals, supplies, jobs, and Interstate 5 much faster after a seismic event.

"Combined with emergency response planning, this project will help reconnect communities in weeks or months instead of years," says Walker. "At the end of the day, this project is about resilience and making sure people can get where they need to go when they need it most." 

25 years of Rich Duncan Construction

By Jordyn VanCleave, Fleet Management/Community Engagement



Investing in people through mentorship, training, and a strong safety culture has helped ensure consistent, high-quality results for clients while providing opportunities for employees to grow and develop their skills. From L to R: Matt, Rich, Lindsay, and Nate.



Over the years, Rich Duncan Construction has supported local organizations, partnered with community initiatives, and contributed time and resources to efforts that strengthen Salem and the surrounding region. From L to R: Lindsay, Jordyn, Katie, and Megan.

Twenty-five years ago, Rich Duncan Construction began with a white Ford pickup and a set of tool bags. In those early days, no job was too small. From repairs and remodels to larger builds, the focus was simple: show up, work hard, and do the job right.

That mindset hasn't changed. Even as the company has grown, Rich Duncan Construction still approaches every project with the same commitment to craftsmanship, reliability, and respect for the people they serve.

Founded in Salem, Oregon, the company was built on the belief that outstanding service extends

beyond the scope of the project itself. It includes the relationships built with clients, colleagues, and the community along the way. From the beginning, careful planning, strong communication, and accountability have guided the way projects are approached.

At the heart of Rich Duncan Construction is a commitment to service. The team listens first, develops thoughtful plans, and works closely with clients throughout the construction process to ensure expectations are met and projects move forward with confidence.

Rich Duncan Construction has long

believed that strong companies help build strong communities.

Over the years, the company has supported local organizations, partnered with community initiatives, and contributed time and resources to efforts that strengthen Salem and the surrounding region. For the team at Rich Duncan Construction, building isn't just about structures; it's about contributing to the places where people live, work, and gather.

Just as important as the projects themselves is the culture within the company.

What began as a one-person

The team listens first, develops thoughtful plans, and works closely with clients throughout the construction process to ensure expectations are met and projects move forward with confidence.

operation has grown into a team of talented professionals across project management, field supervision, estimating, safety, and skilled trades. Many team members have been with the company for years, creating a workplace that feels more like a family than a job site.

There is a shared pride in the work, a commitment to supporting one another, and a culture built on trust, respect, and accountability. Investing in people through mentorship, training, and a strong safety culture has helped ensure consistent, high-quality results for clients while providing opportunities for employees to grow and develop their skills.

Another important part of the company's success has been the leadership team that helped guide its growth. From early on, Rich Duncan surrounded the business with strong talent and trusted

partners who shared the same vision for quality, service, and long-term success. As the company expanded, he brought on a vice president and later a chief financial officer, while also bringing key partners into the business. Their leadership and shared commitment to the company's values have helped guide growth while maintaining the principles on which the company was founded.

As the company looks toward the future, its philosophy remains simple: no job is too small, and no project is too large. Every project deserves careful planning, experienced leadership, and a team committed to delivering quality results.

That mindset continues to guide the company's growth as it invests in talent development, strengthens relationships with clients and partners, and prepares the next generation of leadership within the

organization. Succession planning and mentorship help ensure that the values that built the company remain strong for years to come.

Looking back, the journey from a single pickup truck and tool bags to a trusted regional construction partner reflects years of dedication, collaboration, and steady growth. It also reflects the many people who have been part of that journey along the way.

Rich Duncan Construction is grateful for the clients who have entrusted the company with their homes, businesses, and projects. The company is equally thankful for the employees whose skill, pride in their work, and commitment to safety continue to shape its success. And it recognizes the Salem community, whose partnerships and support have helped make the past 25 years possible.

This silver anniversary represents more than time in business. It reflects relationships built, projects completed, and a continued commitment to doing good work with integrity.

As Rich Duncan Construction looks ahead, the mission remains the same: deliver dependable craftsmanship, support the community it serves, and approach every project, large or small, with the same dedication that started it all. 

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