

PARTNERSHIP PROFILE

LMC Construction Beaverton, Ore.

***BMC West helps
a diverse general
contractor upgrade
affordable housing
throughout the
Portland area.***



Members of the LMC team include (L-R): project manager Ryan Duffin, president Chris Duffin, and v.p. Kyle Anderson.

If you've ever undertaken a remodeling project, or even just thought about it, you understand the inherent risks of discovering a costly surprise behind the finishes, dealing with live-in clients, and working within existing conditions. Now tack on the added pressure of working with a budget that suits below market-rate multifamily housing, a legion of subcontractors, tax-supported funding sources, and the need to get in and get out while the tenants are at work ... and expect their kitchen or bathroom in complete working order when they return.

You've just had a glimpse of Chris Duffin's world. As president of LMC Construction in Beaverton, Ore., he's carved a deep niche in the Portland market for meeting (and exceeding) lofty expectations for tenant-occupied multifamily housing rehabilitation projects, and forging relationships with state and local officials, affordable housing developers, and a variety of loyal subs and suppliers. "I was already interested in that type of work [when we started LMC], and saw an opportunity in the market for it," says

Duffin. "We've got enough experience with them now that we're pretty efficient and have very few surprises."

Such projects, typically involving tenant-occupied units, account for about 70 percent of LMC's workload; the rest, managed by a separate division of the company, are a mix of new and remodeling work, from a mixed-use downtown art school and condo project beginning this month to townhouses and office buildings.

But the bread-and-butter is the apartment rehab and restoration business. Consisting of both cosmetic changes and more substantial features, such as new siding, windows, plumbing, and electrical work, the projects typically come from private investor/owners who purchase buildings in need of an update, leveraging state and local dollars to help finance the work under the caveat that the units remain affordable. "Most of the projects were built in the 1960s and '70s and haven't been renovated or updated since," says Duffin. "The ultimate goal is to upgrade the property so it will be sustainable for *another 30 years.*"

Among several challenges such projects present, scheduling a crew of subcontractors around a tenant's schedule — often within the context of a 9-hour workday — is among the greatest. "It's critical to coordinate with the tenant



Orchards Plaza Apartments in McMinnville, Ore., a 51-unit apartment complex for older adults, is an example of LMC's "occupied renovation" projects; the \$420,000 project was completed in December 2005.

and the on-site manager or property owner,” says Duffin. “Often, we have to demo and replace an entire kitchen before they get home.”

Occasionally, the pressure is relieved a little by blocking off a section (and thus several units) of the building, temporarily displacing tenants to other apartments in the complex until the work is completed, then moving them back into the renovated section to work on another.

In addition to its now-established reputation for successfully navigating such projects, as well as its other ventures, LMC Construction is also able to maintain an attractive status because of its commitment to safety. Despite working in the often-litigious world of multifamily housing and using primarily subcontracted labor, the firm maintains a no-loss record and enviable general liability insurance premiums that help keep its costs competitive.

Forging reliable partnerships has been a key to achieving that status. Among its partners, BMC West’s Sherwood, Ore., location supplies LMC with doors, windows, trim, and, most recently, cabinets ... as well as the labor to install those products. “Timing is the real key,” says BMC West’s Craig Kerschen,



Lincoln Village Apartments in Lincoln City, Ore., required LMC to work with the property owner and tenants to upgrade 38 apartments; completed in May 2006, the project budget was \$995,669.

echoing Duffin. “Because every project is different, we’ve customized our services to meet LMC’s scheduling demands to make sure materials and labor are ready to go. It’s a one-stop shop for Chris.”

To that end, Kerschen and his team typically make site visits to confirm the scope of work and suggest alternatives within the budget that will ensure a reliable schedule and deliver the best finished project. “Many times, there are no plans available for these buildings ... so we have to make certain assumptions,” he says.

Fortunately, that service will follow LMC as it diversifies geographically for the first time for a rehabilitation project in Seattle, with similar installed services capability at BMC West’s Issaquah location. “I’ve asked our guys up north to take care of Chris the same way we do here,” says Kerschen.



North Main Village Townhomes, a 13-unit, \$2.1 million attached project in Milwaukie, Ore., completed in 2006, represents LMC’s work in new construction.



“Chris likes that he can call us, anytime, for individual management of his needs for products, budget, and schedule.”

— *Craig Kerschen, BMC West, Sherwood, Ore., location*

Photos Courtesy LMC Construction