

# STRONG FOUNDATION

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MW Builders is a national general contractor with expertise that spans today's fastest-growing construction sectors, including government, senior living, hospitality, multi-family, light industrial, manufacturing, healthcare, and education. The "MW" stands for the company's long-standing history founded on Midwestern values; while "Builders" reflects the essence of being craftsmen: people who build high-quality buildings, strong partnerships, and the best teams.

### About Strong Foundation:

# PARTNERSHIPS AND PROJECTS BUILT TO LAST

In the construction industry, everything we do — from the buildings we build to the partnerships we cultivate — starts with a strong foundation. But it doesn't stop there.

From these foundations, the frame of our company is constructed with innovative ideas and solutions to our clients' needs. Our relationships have helped us constantly evolve into an industry leader that makes offering an unparalleled construction experience a reality.

With our MW Builders magazine, [Strong Foundation](#), we hope to provide you insight on the latest construction trends; highlight our partners and projects making an impact

in their communities; and share resources you might find helpful. As employee owners, we want to do what we can to build upon the lasting relationships we've already created and provide you value beyond the structures we build.

After all, having a strong foundation is only the beginning. It truly helps support everything that comes after.

Strong Foundation is published twice a year for clients and partners of MW Builders.

We would love your feedback.

Please send comments and requests to: [editor@mwbbuilders.com](mailto:editor@mwbbuilders.com)



Beechwood Village Student Housing  
Fayetteville, AR | Owner: Fountain Residential

## MAKING THE GRADE



*College enrollment is on the rise, and universities are not the only ones competing for students' dollars. The rise of private student housing at schools across the country is creating a bidding war of sorts, a competition for tenants that is transforming the industry — and the role of the general contractor — in the process.*

Driven by enrollment increases and the need to maximize space and dollars, developers have been snatching up the land adjacent to universities to offer students an alternative to

dorms and on-campus housing. Often times, this means the design team must find ways to maximize the footprint on a tight site. Brent Little, president of Fountain Residential Partners, explains, "Walk-to-campus and campus-edge projects make up the majority of development in the student arena. This means higher density solutions with structured parking, Type III, concrete, and hybrid typologies that were previously only found in urban market rate and condo developments."

#### THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE GC

This structure type of modern private student housing not only lends itself to quicker construction, resulting in a faster turnaround for developers, but it also means a change in the role of the general contractor. "Private student housing projects of today feature multiple systems, for instance a blend of steel and wood-frame construction, which means developers are dealing with multiple building codes. Because of this, we've seen a shift in the

way we work with designers in that they now ask for direction from the GCs to account for all the added intricacies to an already tight schedule," said Isaac Byers, senior estimator for MW Builders.

The need to find solutions to work within a tight schedule — which leaves no room for a redesign — has highlighted the importance of preconstruction and a collaborative design process. "More owners are finding value in the preconstruction process, because it allows us to help guide the project and work within a client's budget. Owners want these structures open and leasing in time for the school year, so we can't afford any delays. By evaluating different scenarios and their cost implications with the clients during preconstruction, we have an accurate budget from day one and can eliminate the value engineering phase of construction — all of which are critical to finishing on time," said Byers.

#### COMPETITION DRIVING AMENITIES

The push to build and open the units faster means developers have more time to fill them with tenants, which is another

Enrollments at all degree-granting, post-secondary institutions are expected to grow by

**950,000 new students**

between 2016 and 2018, driving the need for more student housing options.

*Axiometrics, an apartment and student housing market research firm*



*Beechwood Village Student Housing*



“Walk-to-campus and campus-edge projects are the majority of development in the student arena. This means higher density solutions with structured parking, Type III, concrete, and hybrid typologies that were previously only found in urban market rate and condo developments.”

**Brent Little,**  
President,  
Fountain Residential Partners



er competition in and of itself — and students are the winners. “Private student housing is a hugely competitive market, one in which developers are trying to outshine one another with amenities to compete with other properties in the market. Many of the newer properties have a boutique hotel feel, full of flair and fun simply to wow students,” said Brooks Short, lead designer for SouthPark Interiors, LLC, the company charged with outfitting many of these properties. “SPI’s extensive knowledge of building and renovation allows us to work with all teams involved to evaluate where we can use the budget to create a truly unique living experience.”

Little sees the trend in both the construction of the units and end result for tenants as a win-win. “Developers receive a quality asset that maintains its value with relatively immediate cash flow upon completion, and students get a condo-like home with resort-style amenities near campus. The additional independence of living off campus without the university — and the superior amenities apartments offer — make for a winning combination.”



*Beechwood Village Student Housing*



KANSAS CITY → NEW YORK

## PARTNERED FOR SUCCESS



# MCI

### Home2 Suites

Downtown Kansas City

Owner: True North Hotels



# JFK

### Residence Inn / Springhill Suites

Fishkill, New York

Owner: True North Hotels



*Building partnerships that last requires businesses to evolve with the industry and with client expectations to better foster relationships that result in shared success. From changes in the way teams communicate to the expanding networks of companies nationwide, owners are now looking beyond their backyards when hiring partners, which means general contractors must adapt and expand their reach from coast to coast. It requires building the resources and capabilities to cater to clients' needs, no matter their location.*

The ability to travel from jobsite to jobsite provides stability, consistency, and familiarity — something owners value and often look for in a partner. “The biggest advantage is the unmatched comfort level. Because True North develops nationwide, our partnership with MW Builders is a healthy marriage of shared capacity, consistency, talents, and like-minded approaches to doing business,” said Brad Wiens, chief development officer of True North Hotel Group, Inc. “When you’re dealing with many moving parts in geographically diverse markets, those tangible and intangible advantages

add enormous value to our ability to deliver best-in-class hotels.”

#### CONSISTENCY IS KEY

Wiens also notes that stability is the foundation of a successful partnership, especially when it comes to building in multiple locations across the country. “Consistency breeds trust, communication, collaboration, and reliability. We have faith in MW Builders, and they have faith in us. They advocate for us by bringing in the right numbers, which ultimately saves us time and money — and this carries from project to project,” he explained.

The comfort level a consistent partnership brings can offer more than just peace of mind — it can be the difference maker in the outcome of the project. Allen Peacock, vice president of development at Taurus Investment Holdings, believes relationships affect the end result. “Relationships are huge. When you have the right relationship with the right people who have experience and presence in multiple markets, it can be the difference between a successful and unsuccessful project,” said Peacock.

**“As in any relationship, working with a partner is a fusing of two cultures — from a work ethics and quality perspective. When the two cultures have common elements, it comes together.”**

**Allen Peacock,**  
Vice President of Development —  
U.S., Taurus Investment Holdings

## SETTING EXPECTATIONS

Establishing a relationship and partnering with the same general contractor on multiple projects not only offers consistency, but it also sets expectations from the beginning — without the learning curve on each one. “One of the biggest values of using a consistent partner is that, thanks to previous experience, expectations are known from day one,” said Peacock.

Those expectations may not always come without some challenges at the beginning of the partnership, but Wiens has seen the benefit of sticking with a general contractor who can travel. “When an MW Builders’ PM worked with us on his first project, we challenged him with some expectations and worked through a bit of a learning curve with him,” said Wiens. “By the time we got to the second project, he knew exactly what our expectations were and how to meet them. He went to bat for us. He was our advocate. He had our best interests at heart. That initial learning curve turned out to be a valuable investment in our relationship, leading to quality projects that a good partnership will always produce.”

## Industry Perspectives

*Perhaps one of the biggest challenges in today’s construction landscape is finding and selecting the right general contractor. So, we asked some of our partners what they look for and what challenges they face when looking for that perfect match.*

### What do you see as the biggest challenge in today’s market when selecting a general contractor?

**Bret Sheffield:** The biggest challenge is finding a general contractor who brings value to the specific project. There are great contractors who are not the right fit for some projects; the challenge is to find the right fit for the project at hand.

**Angelo Eguizabal:** Finding the complete package — a GC with the financial stability, experience, and who can price effectively — can be difficult to find. When we select a partner, we’re really looking for a long-term business relationship, a team we can work with on multiple projects over multiple years.

### What is the most important attribute/capability that you look for in a general contractor?

**Andrew Schaeffer:** Trust is a very important attribute when we select a contractor. Any project is going to have challenges and obstacles to overcome; it is important that you can trust the team you are working with.

**Jeff Hammersley:** The ability to bring value engineering ideas to the table, throughout the design process, while keeping our design intent intact is an important skill that we look for in a partner.

### What are the biggest problems that you have experienced while working with a general contractor?

**Bret Sheffield:** We run into problems when the GC is spread too thin, or they proclaim to understand the building type but don’t have available personnel with appropriate experience. Pioneering with a general contractor who does not know the nuances of the building type makes the project susceptible to errors, time delays, and cost overruns.

**Angelo Eguizabal:** We’ve noticed some common denominators when it comes to issues with general contractors. The biggest ones would be a lack of transparency, not planning effectively, and not managing appropriately — especially when issues with subs arise.

### How have general contractors responded to the challenges of today’s market?

**Andrew Schaeffer:** With the amount of work out there, it appears to be difficult to get and hang on to subcontractors who can complete their work scope in the timeframe expected. It takes more and stricter management of a project to keep them on schedule.

**Bret Sheffield:** We appreciate general contractors who know their strengths and don’t try to be something they aren’t. Be an expert at something. Know that building type or process as well — or better — than anyone else. Value is driven when the general contractor has a clear understanding of what the end product should be — and how to get there.

**Jeff Hammersley:** Successful GCs work to nurture good employees and capitalize on their hidden talents, thus keeping good people. This keeps the new employee training down, so the machine can run smoothly.

**Angelo Eguizabal:** To compensate for the labor shortage, general contractors must be able to drill down and manage their sub base to make things happen. They can’t always rely on the subs to continue working effectively without more involvement from beginning to end.



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