



LIVE OAK CONTRACTING





# *A Year of* **STRONG GROWTH**

*Live Oak Contracting is a third party general contracting firm with deep roots in Jacksonville, Florida. The company has completed projects throughout Florida and the Southeastern United States, as well as in New England. Live Oak was previously featured in the March 2017 edition of Construction in Focus; one year later, we spoke with Paul Bertozzi, Managing Partner and Founder of Live Oak, to learn about the exciting new developments Live Oak has undertaken.*











## Written by Laura McHargue

**L**ive Oak Contracting specializes in multifamily and commercial construction, including new construction, renovation and rehab, and tenant improvement projects. The company's portfolio is diverse, featuring multiple commercial facilities as well as numerous multifamily developments of all types, from student housing to luxury apartments.

Live Oak was founded in 2014 by Paul Bertozzi, who serves as the firm's managing partner. Leveraging his extensive experience in commercial contracting and his strong client relationships, Bertozzi has built the company's reputation on collaboration and trust. This collaborative approach sets Live Oak apart from the competition. By working closely with developers, architects, and designers throughout the process, Live Oak helps clients to save valuable project time and maximize resources. In the previous feature, Bertozzi noted that 90 percent of the firm's clients are repeat clients.

Live Oak has experienced a number of exciting changes since the company was first featured in **Construction in Focus** last year. The company recently hired a new Director of Construction, as well as a Safety Coordinator and several other new staff members. The company also launched a new internship program for students in the University of North Florida's construction management program.



2017 was an outstanding year for Live Oak; the company contracted \$200 million in work, growing its revenue by more than 200 percent in a single year. Live Oak was recognized for its rapid growth by the **Jacksonville Business Journal**, which named Live Oak the 2nd fastest growing company in Jacksonville in 2017. The **Jacksonville Business Journal** also named Live Oak #14 on its list of top general contractors in the Jacksonville area. Bertozzi was personally recognized in the **Jacksonville Business Journal's** "40 Under 40" list for his leadership, accomplishments, and involvement in the community.

Indeed, community service is an integral part of Live Oak's corporate culture. "We do our best to support the community that supports us day in and day out," Bertozzi says. "It's always been important to us, and we enjoy being able to give back." Live Oak's staff is actively involved in volunteering as well as philanthropic giving. Among the numerous charities the company supports are the Monique Burr Foundation, United Way, ►



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## FEATURED PROJECTS

### Atlantic On the Avenue

Atlantic on the Avenue is a new apartment complex in Charleston, South Carolina, which features two residential buildings, a clubhouse, a pool, and three parking garages. Completed in 2017, the project value was \$19 million. "The community turned out really well. The delivery was on time, and the ownership group has been able to stabilize the community in a short period of time. It's a great project to showcase what we do, and we've had three new clients that have wanted to work with us because they saw that project," Bertozzi says.

### The Residence at Gateway Commons

The Residence at Gateway Commons in Scarborough, Maine is a residential complex featuring 12 residential buildings, parking garages, a club house, and a pool situated on 15 acres of land. This project represents further northward expansion for Live Oak. In partnership with Providence, Rhode Island based KGI properties, Live Oak recently broke ground on the site that will become a 280 unit apartment community. The project is on track to be completed by August. "We're wrapping up the site work, and we'll start framing next month. We're looking forward to going vertical on this project. It's exciting for us," Bertozzi says.







► the Jacksonville Jaguars Foundation, and The Arc Jacksonville. Many of the company's staff members also volunteer with the Boys and Girls Club of Jacksonville.

"We're looking forward to contracting around \$300 million in 2018. The market continues to be good for multifamily construction. The work that we've done has been recognized, and we're getting new opportunities on a number of projects," says Bertozzi. To accommodate its rapid growth, Live Oak has leased a new 14,000 square-foot office space in downtown Jacksonville. The company's new headquarters will occupy two floors of the 100 North Laura building, and build-out is already underway.

"We will continue growing over the coming years through our partnerships, to be one of the most productive general contractors in the market," Bertozzi says. As Bertozzi reflects on the company's success, he is quick to give credit to Live Oak's staff for their excellent work. "We've been successful, not because of any one thing that any one person within the company has done, but by building a team, and having everyone working toward the goals. It's a very team-oriented company culture that we've created here at Live Oak; everyone works together, everyone is bought in to what the successes are and what the future goals are, and that's how we've been able to be so successful in such a short period of time."

One of the greatest challenges facing the construction industry is the shortage of trained construction managers caused by the Great Recession. "Everybody talks about the labor shortage in the market, and it's still a very real and very present problem. During the recession, nobody wanted to get into construction because there wasn't any work, which has created a void. Construction companies greatly reduced in size. Then, after the recession we had rapid growth, and we still haven't been able to bring people into the market as quickly as needed," Bertozzi explains.

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Live Oak is actively implementing solutions to this problem. "That's been one of our big focuses in 2017," Bertozzi says. "The universities are doing a good job of starting to train people; there are good construction management programs at the University of North Florida, University of Florida, and Auburn University, and we've recruited talent there. Now we've created an internship program at the company, bringing future graduates to work with us." Live Oak's internship program offers students experience with actual construction projects, and gives Live Oak the opportunity to train future construction managers. "Beyond academia, our interns have actual experience of what is done in the field and how the construction process works, and so we've been able to capitalize on gaining some of the young talent that's coming back into the market."

Live Oak employed three interns in 2017. "They've been a great addition to the team, and we're going to continue growing that part of our recruiting program, to train people and bring them in as soon as they come out of school. We want to help them with their careers as they move forward. That's been one of our main focuses in 2017," Bertozzi says.

To be sure, Live Oak is committed to sustainable, steady growth. "Over the next few years, we will focus on stabilizing and staying in the market that we're in. We've been very successful, and I think we will continue to have solid years in 2018 and 2019. Looking to 2020, we know that historically, in election years we







see a pull-back in the market. That's why we're focused on continuing to stabilize over the next two years, which will carry us through the election year. After the election year, the growth will continue," Bertozzi explains.

The company is well-positioned to handle changing market conditions. "Even through the recession, multi-family was and continues to be a very solid and stable market, and we take advantage of those growth opportunities." ■

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