

# A Public Affair

LATHROP CONSTRUCTION AIMS FOR AN ON-TIME, ON-BUDGET DELIVERY FOR CSU. BY BROOKE INFUSINO

**W**hen Lathrop Construction Associates Inc. was awarded the contract for California State University East Bay's Student Services/Administration Replacement building in Hayward, Calif., Vice President Dave Piper knew the firm would be up for the challenge. In addition to its expertise in building commercial and industrial buildings, the firm has specialized in projects for universities and K-12 institutions since it was founded in 1951.

Lathrop was awarded the \$33.4 million project in June 2007 based on its low bid. The project is the firm's second for CSU East Bay recently.

Designed by RMW Architecture and Interiors, the 100,467-square-foot, four-story building will house student services and administrative offices. The building features a two-story open lobby, two levels of office space dedicated to student services and two levels for administration. Two elevators connect all four floors. The telecommunica-

*Lathrop Construction Associates Inc.*

[www.lathropconstruction.com](http://www.lathropconstruction.com)

• *Project value: \$33.4 million*

• *Location: Hayward, Calif.*

• *Employees: Four (administrative)*

• *Scope: Student Services/ Administration Replacement building*

*"We had plenty of room to store materials."* - Dave Piper, VP

tions and audio-visual systems are in the walls and are part of the wireless technology integrated into the building.

"The exterior is made of glass and aluminum panels, and the lobby contains a lot of intricate face work, such as terrazzo," Piper says. "It's a really nice building."

The building will replace an existing student services building, which the university is replacing due to its location on a fault line, putting it at risk in the event of an earthquake. The facility is being constructed in the middle of the campus with very little impact to students, staff or parking, Piper says. With roughly half of the building constructed on shallow bedrock,

Lathrop had to deal with some tricky site excavation and sewer and water line tie-ins to construct the foundations. "We had plenty of room to store materials, and we installed a perimeter fence to keep the students and staff from wandering onto the construction site," Piper notes.

Lathrop says it always has been at the forefront in developing new methods and techniques for the administration of its work. Senior management at the firm average more than 30 years with the company, making projects such as the replacement building easier for the firm to tackle.

With roughly 60 subcontractors on site and up to 100 workers at project peak, Lathrop is able to keep the CSU East Bay project on track. Piper says the firm "is fairly prudent with its selection of subcontractors." Progress and scheduled activity updates are tracked through weekly progress meetings between the subcontractors, Lathrop and CSU East Bay.

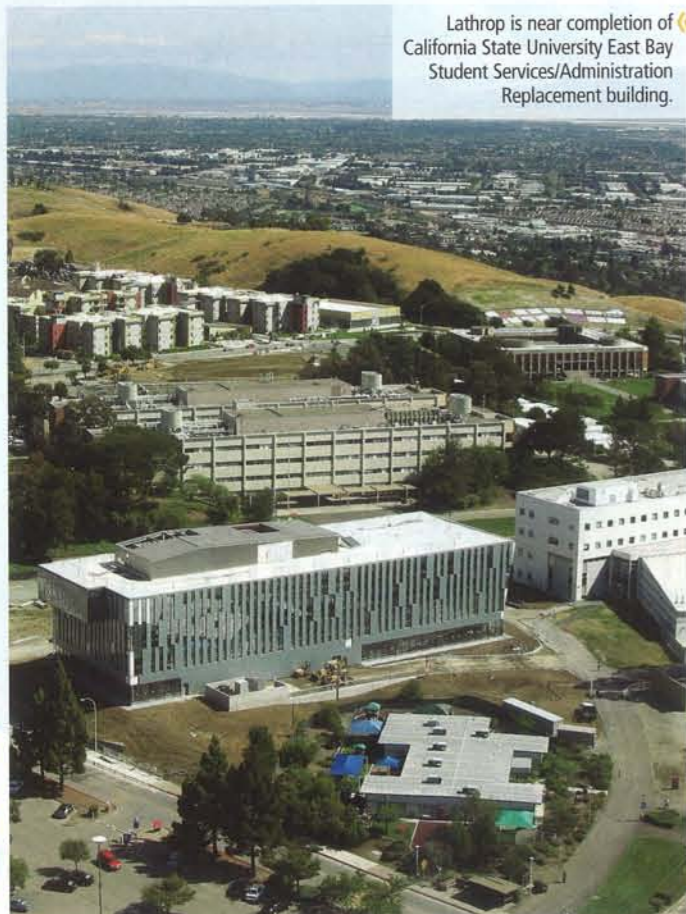
Although not LEED certified, Piper says the building is unique from other institutional projects it works on based on the extensive commissioning process. "We have to get the building up and running early to make sure the systems are running as they should," Piper says.

## Budget Concerns

Although few challenges have developed in the construction process, the project encountered a delay when funding for the building fell short mid-construction.

**'The exterior is made of glass and aluminum panels, and the lobby contains a lot of intricate face work, such as terrazzo. It's a really nice building.'**

In December 2008, as a result of California's budget crisis, the project was brought to a halt, forcing Lathrop to pack up and leave the site. Then, less than three months after the project was placed on hold, the crew was brought back to complete the work.



Lathrop is near completion of California State University East Bay Student Services/Administration Replacement building.



The building's exterior will feature glass and aluminum panels.



With plenty of room to store materials, Lathrop is able to stick to the timeline.



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# 'We've basically been on track doing 50/50 for universities and high school[s].'

As of mid-June, work was progressing on the interior aluminum frames, carpet, HVAC installation, trim and tiling. Piper says the project is on track for the November turnover deadline.

## Sticking to What it Knows

Lathrop intends to stick within the markets it specializes in, unlike other general contractors who have diversified sectors based on the economic downturn. According to Piper, "it seems like there is work out there to bid, but we are seeing 15 to 20 bidders on one project versus the two bidders that we saw when we bid on this project."

The majority of Lathrop's contracts today are in K-12 education projects, mostly new construction. "We've basically been on track doing 50/50 for universities and high school projects. There is still bond money left from previous years that is being put to use in some cases, but we are hearing from some of our architect friends that there is not much new design in the pipeline."

## The Legacy of Lathrop

F.P. Lathrop formed the company in 1951 after he graduated from the University of California in Berkeley. Within a few years, he bought what is now the Emeryville Peninsula next to San Francisco Bay

Bridge. He developed the entire parcel during the 1960s and 1970s. In the early 1980s, Lathrop presented his employees with the opportunity to form a successor company. Four senior employees who had worked for the company since the 1960s and 1970s bought it, and Lathrop Construction became Lathrop Construction Associates.

Since its beginning, Lathrop Construction Co. has been a participant in the construction industry in the San Francisco Bay Area and more recently in the Sacramento Valley. In its history, Lathrop has completed nearly \$2.5 billion of building work. Lathrop is a general building contractor involved in institutional, commercial and industrial buildings.

Several years of experience in the institutional sector also helped Lathrop develop key relationships. "Our vast experience has provided us with many years of experience dealing with the state architect and many of the architects who specialize in the design of schools," it says.

"We have always enjoyed the services of a dedicated staff of qualified professionals. Our personnel are committed to the idea of quality in all aspects of construction.

"We have always been at the forefront in developing new methods and techniques for the administration of our work. The senior management of Lathrop averages more than 30 years with the company, and the tenure of most of the remainder of the staff is almost as long." ♦

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# A Healthy, Quality Education

LATHROP IS DELIVERING A HIGH-PERFORMANCE SCHOOL IN THE NAPA VALLEY. BY KATHRYN JONES

When classes begin in fall 2010, students living in American Canyon, Calif., will no longer need to make the 20- to 30-minute commute to Napa High School. Instead, they'll have a high school of their very own, thanks to the collaborative efforts of the Napa Valley Unified School District, Santa Rosa, Calif.-based Quattrocchi Kwok Architects (QKA) and Lathrop Construction Associates Inc. of Benicia, Calif.

The \$120 million, 260,000-square-foot American Canyon High School will consist of 11 buildings ranging from one to three stories. Some will be built with structural steel metal stud construction, while others will be wood frame. The project is slated to reach completion by July 2010.

American Canyon High School will include a multilevel gymnasium, locker rooms, a 400-seat theater, culinary arts facilities, a library, computer labs, ceramics and art labs, digital media labs, science and construction labs, and math and language labs, along with standard classrooms. In addition, the schools will feature a state-of-the-art aquatic center with a competition swimming pool; baseball, softball and soccer fields; and a football stadium.

## Lease-Leaseback

Construction on American Canyon High School began in June 2008 and has run

» The \$120 million American Canyon High School in California will consist of 11 buildings when finished in July 2010. It will include science, construction and art labs, an aquatic center, culinary facilities and various sports fields.



### Lathrop Construction

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- Budget: \$120 million
- Location: American Canyon, Calif.
- Scope: High school campus
- Peak employees: 250

"[Lease-leaseback] allows for a teamwork atmosphere throughout the design phase and construction." —Chris Van Felt, project manager



smoothly, according to Lathrop project managers Chris Van Pelt and Anthony D'Amante. This was due, in part, to the school district's decision to manage the project through the lease-leaseback delivery system – a groundbreaking method for delivering schools on a strict budget and accelerated schedule.

Lease-leaseback projects are stemmed from private-public partnerships between school districts and developers. Under the system, a school district purchases land and leases it back to a private developer for a small annual fee. The developer then finances construction of the school and subsequently leases the facility back to the school district over a period of time.

The contractor sets an outright cap on the project budget and participates in the design process, ultimately giving the school district a quality building at a lower price. In addition, "It allows for a teamwork atmosphere throughout the design phase and construction," Van Pelt says, which lessens the headache for all participating parties.

### CHPS Certification

Lathrop will implement green construction methods to help the school achieve Collaborative for High Performance Schools (CHPS) certification. This program is fundamentally similar to the LEED program used to certify commercial buildings, but is specifically catered to education buildings. "The mission of the [CHPS] is to facilitate the design, construction and operation of high-performance schools – environments that are not only energy- and resource-efficient, but also healthy, comfortable, well-lit and containing the amenities for a quality education," according to the organization.

CHPS acknowledges its parallels to LEED, but "must first acknowledge that so long as an ever-increasing number of schools being built and modernized are healthy, high-performance, green, sustainable learning environments for children, then both the CHPS and [LEED] programs ... are successful," it states. "However ... the CHPS criteria and LEED are structurally, philosophically and programmatically different."

### Green Components

Although Lathrop is well-versed in LEED, American Canyon High School is the company's first CHPS project. Lathrop is integrating several green components into the school, including a megawatt photovoltaic system; a geothermal well system with more than 200 wells; high-performance glazing, automated daylighting systems and mitigation ponds; vegetative swales for natural filtration of stormwater runoff; and recycled materials.

A creek that ran along the site's perimeter created a peculiar obstacle for Lathrop. Because a criteria for CHPS is to preserve habitats for indigenous animals, crews had to be mindful of the native frog species at the location. In addition, Lathrop discovered naturally occurring asbestos in the soil and took great precaution to remove it from the site.

Despite the unique challenges associated with the site, Lathrop remains on schedule, Van Pelt notes. The company has completed the structural steel and is nearly finished with the wood framing. It will start the sheetrock and plaster work on three of the buildings in the weeks ahead. He credits this to the team's decision to phase the project. Lathrop opted to complete the earthwork and utilities before winter set in and while the building package still was under Division of the State Architect review. ♦



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