

# Public Service

**+ Lathrop Construction has built many schools in the Bay Area and Sacramento Valley.** *By Vicki Martinka Petersen*

**Lathrop Construction**  
[www.lathropconstruction.com](http://www.lathropconstruction.com)  
 2009 sales: \$120 million  
 Headquarters: Benicia, Calif.  
 Employees: 50  
 Service: General contractor

**> In its almost 60-year history, Lathrop Construction has completed nearly \$2.5 billion worth of building work.** “Almost all of our work is in new construction,” Vice President Dave Piper says. “We do remodeling and alterations but mostly new construction.”

Since its beginning in 1951, Lathrop Construction has been a major participant in the San Francisco Bay Area construction market and, more recently, the Sacramento Valley. The company has worked on institutional, commercial and industrial buildings in Northern California, including the North Terminal at San Francisco International Airport.

The company’s services range from project management and scheduling to design and quality control. Each project utilizes a project director, project manager, superintendent, assistant superintendents (if necessary), project coordinator / engineer and scheduler.

The company’s expertise is in school construction. The company has done work for middle schools, high schools and colleges in the Bay Area and Sacramento Valley. It has completed numerous buildings on university campuses including University of California, San Francisco State University and Stanford University.

## Seeing Green

The contractor is in the process of completing work on American Canyon High School in American Canyon, Calif., the first high school in California to receive



Lathrop Construction has extensive experience in building schools ranging from middle schools to university buildings.

Collaborative for High Performance Schools (CHPS) verification. Similar to LEED certification, CHPS is the nation’s oldest green building rating program.

“At the time (the project design started), LEED didn’t have certification for schools,” Piper explains. “Now, the USGBC has developed a certification program for schools.”

The school attained its CHPS green status by installing a geothermal heating and cooling system. The system includes nearly 300 wells that use the earth’s constant core temperature to heat or cool the water piping that is run through the wells. Crews also recycle 90 percent of both pre- and post-construction materials on-site.

*“We have a responsibility to meet and exceed goals within our recycling [program].”*  
 > Anthony Reed, project manager

The more than \$120 million project entails constructing six multi-story buildings with administrative offices, a library, 400-seat theater, multi-use classrooms, a split-level gym, student store and an aquatic center. Lathrop also is building a football stadium, two concession stands, baseball fields, soccer fields, and tennis and basketball courts. Construction began in 2008, and the school dedication is set for June 2010.

“A lot of the work has been done simultaneously,” Project Manager Chris Van Pelt explains. “We rocked in three buildings at the same time, then those crews moved onto three other buildings. The painters started right behind them. Now the flooring is going in.”

The contractor faced many environmental challenges during construction, including monitoring a protected frog species that lives in a creek on the school grounds, Van Pelt says. Another challenge was the removal of naturally occurring asbestos in the soil from the 60 acre job site, he adds.

## Continuous Education

The contractor is nearing completion of the Las Positas College Child Development Center in Livermore, Calif. The \$10.2 million project entails three new single-story buildings for administration, a toddler wing and a pre-school wing. The LEED-certified project also includes construction of an outdoor play area. Work began in March 2009 and is expected to be completed in September 2010.

“We don’t typically see sitework this

intensive,” Project Manager Anthony Reed says. “The outdoor learning environments are quite intricate. They really are outdoor classrooms.”

The development center at the community college not only provides a place for children while their parents attend classes, but also serves as a site for prospective teachers to undergo observations toward their education degree, Reed explains.

As with all of its projects, the contractor maintains a program to recycle as much as it can from the job site. “We have a responsibility to meet and exceed goals within our recycling [program],” Reed continues. “We work with a debris company to pull out and recycle debris. It’s used in this project but done on other projects, as well, even non-LEED [certified buildings].”

## Staying Competitive

Like many companies, Lathrop Construction has been affected by the poor economy. But Piper says their greatest fear is another general contractor going out of business and dragging down subcontractors with them. “Say we’ve got Subcontractor A on a job who is also on a job for General Contractor B. If General Contractor B goes under and takes Subcontractor A’s retention with him, how is Subcontractor A going to be able to complete our project?”

Lathrop Construction maintains a good working relationship with its long-time employees, Piper says. He adds many employees are capable of running and managing a project on their own. “They know what we expect,” Piper says. “They’re committed to keeping the clients [happy].”

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