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US **Builders** Review

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& Company Inc.**

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Open Mind

**J. Calnan &
Associates**

Raising Standards
Through Diversified
Service

**Petrochem
Insulation Inc.**

Cover Story Page 51

Birdair Inc.

Providing Solutions to Challenging
Structural Concepts

Interwest Consulting Group Inc.

Collaborating for Safer Structures

Produced by John Carioti & Written by Molly Shaw

The year 2012 marked the 10-year anniversary of Interwest Consulting Group Inc. (Interwest). The Interwest team specializes in providing professional and consulting services to municipalities for all services provided by city or county public works, engineering and building departments.

Founded in 2002 by Terry Rodrigue, Interwest started out as a one-man band. “At the time, it was just me,” recalls Rodrigue. As a Maine native, Rodrigue grew up on the East Coast. He went to the University of Maine and graduated with a civil engineering degree. After graduating, Rodrigue packed his things and headed for Los Angeles. There, Rodrigue received his MBA from the University of Southern California.

Interwest has done well for itself, as the company now employs 140 professionals spread throughout nine locations. “Because of the type of work we do, we have a lot of satellite offices,” explains Rodrigue. “Our clients want us to be locally based and intimately familiar with their local environment. From the beginning, Interwest established itself as a partner with our clients.”

For its relatively small size, Interwest covers a lot of ground. “We’re fairly scattered due to client requirements,” details Rodrigue. The company has multiple offices in California and Colorado along with one in Las Vegas. Some of Interwest’s offices are actually co-located with its clients.



The Business of Collaboration

Interwest prides itself on seamlessly integrating its staff into any client organization. “A big differentiator for us is having staff that has held positions within agencies and jurisdictions at all levels,” outlines Rodrigue. “Our team provides extensive experience and a deep knowledge of the building industry. This knowledge enables us to collaboratively work with city staff, developers and designers to help them achieve their goals, while maintaining safety and functioning as an extension of our client’s staff.”

The company offers a broad range of services, which includes city engineering, building and safety, capital project management, construction management, real estate services, geographic information systems, land development, storm water management, as well as traffic and transportation engineering. “Our niche in the building industry really focuses on plan review and inspection services as it relates to public and private development,” describes Rodrigue. “Our role is not to analyze or judge aesthetics; for us it’s about safety.”

With the economic downturn, building activity slowed

forcing cities to cut back full-time plan review and inspection staffing. As a result, more cities and counties are contracting out work; this is where Interwest comes in. The company collaborates with these jurisdictions ensuring buildings comply with a long list of safety codes.



Ensuring Safety from Beginning to End

Rodrigue likes to think of the company’s specialty as privatizing public functions. “We work for public agencies doing the work they normally would do and do it on their behalf,” explains Rodrigue. “You could call it domestic outsourcing.”

The company’s building and safety services are code-driven, serving clients through multiple steps of the building process. According to Rodrigue, the first stage of the building approval process is plan review. “From large complex commercial buildings to a simple homeowner’s patio cover, the range of plans we analyze is huge,” shares Sherry Beck, representative for Interwest. “Our goal and primary responsibility is to ensure the proposed structures are code compliant and meet industry safety standards.”

Verified standards relate to things such as energy, fire and life safety and accessibility. “Accessibility is really important,” details Beck. “Through their role approving developments, public agencies are responsible for enforcement of accessibility regulations designed to help citizens with special accessibility needs.” Interwest reviews new construction, as well as existing structures for compliance. Once drawings have been approved Interwest provides inspection services.

An example of the team’s expertise was demonstrated when Interwest performed a complete plan review and construction inspection for the Hatchet Ridge Wind Farm project in Northern California. The 101.2 MW power generating facility incorporates 44 wind turbines. The company

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provided onsite inspection for over a year at the \$250 million job for the construction of wind turbines, electrical substation and overhead transmission lines.

City Center in Las Vegas, an \$8 billion development, is the largest project Interwest has worked on to date. From 2009 to 2011 Interwest provided life safety and structural engineering plan review services for portions of the project located on 67 acres between the Monte Carlo and Bellagio resorts.

“This project included six high-rise buildings, a half-a-million square foot mall, three monorail transit stations, convention center, condos, theatre, hotels, five parking structures and casinos ... all on the Las Vegas strip,” recalls Rodrigue.

Interwest functioned as the agent for Clark County providing on-site review of structural-related issues for all buildings and structures. The project has been touted as the most expensive privately funded construction project in the Western Hemisphere.

“We worked with Clark County to provide on-site plan review

services,” details Rodrigue. “The goal for on-site review was to expedite the plan review and approval process to ensure that construction continued at a rapid pace. Our staff worked closely and in collaboration with the design teams and contractor to resolve construction related issues as quickly and efficiently as possible while maintaining a high level of integrity, safety and quality of the building structures.”

Additionally, Interwest was recently selected for a large 238-acre redevelopment project for the city of Inglewood. “We are very excited about the Hollywood Park project,” states Rodrigue. “This is a wonderful mixed-use development, featuring parks, retail and entertainment, 3,000 residential units, office space, hotel and civic site. Our team will perform a variety of on-call services, including plan review and inspection.”

Despite its relatively small size, Interwest has proven its ability to perform large-scale operations. According to Rodrigue, Interwest’s span of capabilities is due in part to the company’s diverse and well-informed staff. Interwest Consulting Group Inc. is dedicated to partnering with clients to ensure each project meets critical safety standards. •

