



Advent Companies' award-winning Granite Court affordable housing complex in Irvine, CA features 71 units spread over four stories above a two-level parking garage. Photo courtesy of Juan Tallo.

ADVENT COMPANIES

General contractor creates affordable housing with efficient Web-based system

BY JOYCE FINN

AT A GLANCE

LOCATION:
MISSION VIEJO, CA

AREA OF SPECIALTY:
GENERAL
CONTRACTOR

EMPLOYEES:
42

ADVENT COMPANIES, A GENERAL CONTRACTING, construction management, and architectural design firm in southern California, has invested heavily in technology. According to CEO Tyson Jacobsen, "General contracting is behind many industries when it comes to incorporating technology into the delivery system. At Advent we utilize technology not to put a pretty face on our organization, but to build a powerful, productive, and efficient organization."

In 2008, Advent Companies completed more than 1,200 multifamily housing units at a cost to complete of \$120 million, an increase from \$60 million in 2007. "We've structured our delivery system to be profitable at lower quantities of scale projects by focusing on effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery system on a repetitive basis, bringing a value approach to traditionally challenging projects," Jacobsen says.

The company designed, implemented, and maintains its own Web-based construction management software system. The system is customized for multifamily projects and delivers a streamlined communication level between Advent Companies and its clients, sub-contractors, architects, and consultants. The result of this and other improvements the company has methodically introduced yields a 30-percent decrease in delivery times. Relying on technology has brought other benefits as well, such as the ability to quickly review records, compare or forecast future costs, and seamlessly track trends in the market. "When a document enters our office, the goal is to find a way to digitize it and extract the information and place it in a database, whether it's a submittal, RFI, contract, or invoice,"



The community center at Granite Court includes large common areas with built-in movie screens, a professional fitness center, a tutoring room, and a tech lab with computers donated by Advent Companies. Photo courtesy of Juan Tallo.

Jacobsen says. “This way we can, at a moment’s notice, act on real-time data and distribute specific, pertinent, and customized information, in a secure environment, to our vendors, consultants, and especially our clients.”

Jacobsen chose the name Advent—meaning the coming or arrival of something important—because it typifies the company’s approach to business. Ninety percent of Advent Companies’ work is in the affordable housing or Work Force housing sector. “I think we’re involved in one of the noblest aspects of caring for our society by providing affordable housing,” Jacobsen says. “Most of our clients are non-profit developers who provide affordable housing for seniors and professionals such as nurses, firefighters, teachers, and their families, who are an integral part of each community.”

In April 2009, Advent Companies completed Granite Court, an award-winning affordable-housing complex in Irvine,

California. Granite Court features 71 units spread over four stories above a two-level parking garage. A community center within the complex features a computer lab, exercise room, and activity and meeting rooms. The central courtyard sports a tot lot, a covered gas barbecue area with adjacent outdoor fireplace, and a Zen water fountain. Solar panels power all the common areas and each unit has low-flow water closets and fixtures, low- and no-VOC cabinets and paint, carpeting made from recycled materials, granite countertops, and high-efficiency windows, heat pumps, and appliances.

In response to current economic conditions, Jacobsen replies, “We’re trying to anticipate when the market comes back and refine our operations and increase our knowledge and capacity so when work does improve, we’ll be in front of the curve.” The company is also diversifying its services by offering clients design-build architecture services, as well as construction management and

administration services. Although the majority of the firm’s work is in new construction, it has also completed rehabilitation work on 300 units during the past three years. The company expects to increase this number in 2009 and 2010. The company has also developed a risk-management department to refine and improve its legal process to avoid future problems. “Legal issues don’t make us money, but they certainly help us keep what we have,” Jacobsen says. “An increased emphasis on avoiding costly issues by contract management makes the company more efficient.” ABQ

ADVENT COMPANIES

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