



**W.T. RICH COMPANY, INC.**





# A TRUSTWORTHY TEAM DELIVERING HIGH-QUALITY PROJECTS



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*W.T. Rich Company is a family owned and operated general contracting and construction management firm that Walter Rich started in 1968. Historically, the company has focused on renovation projects that are more complicated, challenging and intricate, and ones that other construction companies often avoid. At least eighty percent of its projects each year are for the Massachusetts public construction work market.*

**Written by Jen Hocken**

According to Jonathan Rich, the chief executive officer and son of the founder, "It sounds cliché, but as a firm, we are incredibly client-driven. We are all about running a good project, and making the project a huge success in the eyes of the client, the design team and the other project stakeholders."

Public work in Massachusetts has had some interesting statutory requirements. For many years, the only project delivery method for large, vertical, public construction projects was the traditional lump sum, hard-bid method, which is when the plans are advertised, and the low bidder receives the project. However, in 2004, legislation was passed that allowed for an alternative. The construction manager at risk (CMAR) delivery system entails commitment from the construction manager to ensure that the project remains within a guaranteed maximum price. When the new process of bidding became an option, it was a bit of a transition for W.T. Rich to shift from the old-style bidding and delivery method to the new process, but since 2007, the company has successfully worked on twenty-five CMAR projects. ▶▶







Registry of Probate

- One of W.T. Rich's best attributes is the positive workplace culture that it strives to create and maintain. The firm sees very little turnover and rarely loses its employees to recruiters for other companies. Last year, the Boston Globe named W.T. Rich Company as the second-best place to work in the category of small businesses with fewer than one hundred employees. There is a hands-on approach from the senior management team that is well respected and distinguishes W.T. Rich Company from other, larger construction companies.

The Associated General Contractors (AGC) Build New England Awards occur every two years, and W.T. Rich has received an award each time since 2009. This year, it submitted two projects and is excited about the prospects of both. One is the 190,000 square foot Martin Luther King, Jr. School, a new school for students in kindergarten through grade eight in the City of

Cambridge. The project had eighty million dollars in construction costs and was oriented towards sustainable design and construction. It has solar panels covering the roof, sixty-three geothermal wells and a high-performance envelope.

The other project that has been submitted for a 2017 AGC Build New England award is the Salem Probate and Family Court-house historic renovation and addition. The primary focus of the project was to efficiently house the current and future needs of the probate court on Federal Street in downtown Salem, MA. The building is an essential part of the Federal Street historic district, and the goal was a historically sensitive renovation of the original 1909 building, as well as the construction of a 'right sized' addition, replacing the one built in 1979. There was a tremendous amount of cooperation between W.T. Rich, the design team and the owner throughout planning and construction.

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## CLIENT SATISFACTION ON SALEM COURTHOUSE PROJECT



"The renovation and restoration of the Essex County Probate and Family Court in Salem has been an exemplary project for the Trial Court's ongoing mission to bring its portfolio of facilities up to the highest standards of accessibility, dignity and efficiency. The contribution of the staff of W.T. Rich Company to this tremendous success cannot be overstated. The efforts and effectiveness of field staff, supervision and management were fundamental to the extraordinary results achieved by the entire project team. In my professional experience, I have rarely had the pleasure of working on a project with such strong players at every position – the design team, construction manager, funding agency and user group all came together and delivered exceptional efforts to fulfill their responsibilities

and commitments. The team was able to foster a genuine collegial relationship that enabled all parties to put forth the extra effort needed to complete this exceptional building for the delivery of justice in the Commonwealth. I extend my personal thanks to the professionals at W.T. Rich Company, Perry Dean Rogers Partners, Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance and the Essex County Probate and Family Court for their dedication and hard work. This project was a top 1% experience of my 30-year career."

**Louise Outler**

*Project Administrator*

Court Capital Projects

Salem Probate & Family Court Project

The project team faced many unique and difficult challenges, and it worked together to identify and resolve the challenges in an efficient and cost-effective way. Functioning within the confines of a 1909 building that is bordered by two congested streets, while preserving critical elements of the building's historic nature, presented abundant technical and architectural challenges. The existing record plans for the building were severely inaccurate and missing many details.

These issues required the team to perform at their peak throughout the entire project. The main aspects of the team's approach were open communication, thoughtful research and analysis, and timely and effective decision making. "There were a lot of challenges and complexities along the way dealing with

a 1909 building, and the team navigated through those challenges with the architect, the owner and the user group," says Jonathan Rich. The result is a stunning building. The exterior has remained the same with restoration to fix any blemishes, and the interior is very ornate.

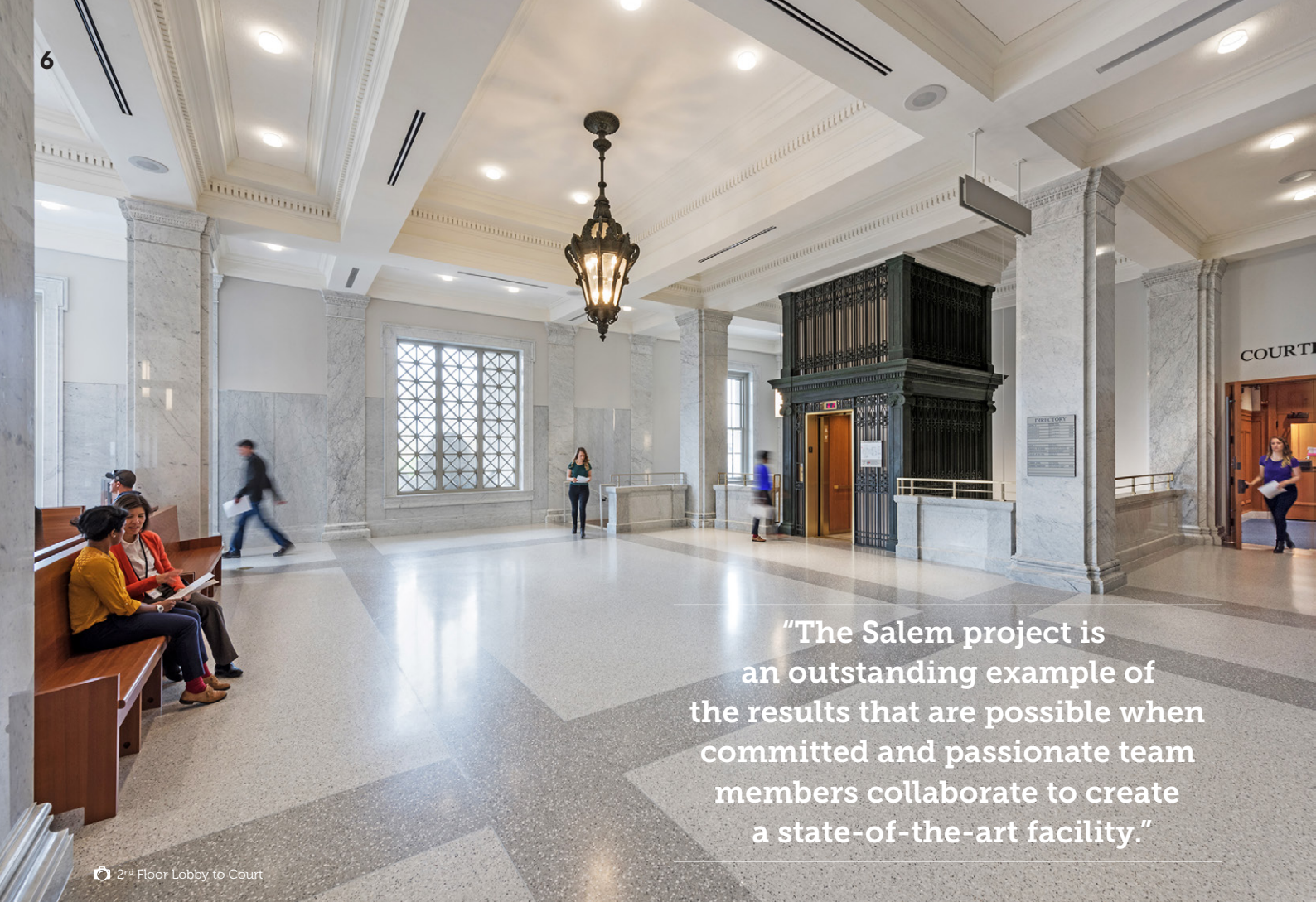
**"We are all about running a good project, making the project a huge success in the eyes of the client, the design team and the other project stakeholders."**

The process of dealing with so many obstacles made the final outcome even more spectacular. The team faced every struggle head on, maintaining a positive, proactive and resource-

ful approach to resolving issues. The company worked closely with key stakeholders to understand their needs and concerns about safety, security, site access, noise and construction impact.

The project was completed on time and the client is absolutely thrilled with the result. It was recently awarded a 2017 ►►





**"The Salem project is an outstanding example of the results that are possible when committed and passionate team members collaborate to create a state-of-the-art facility."**

📷 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Lobby to Court



📷 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Hallway

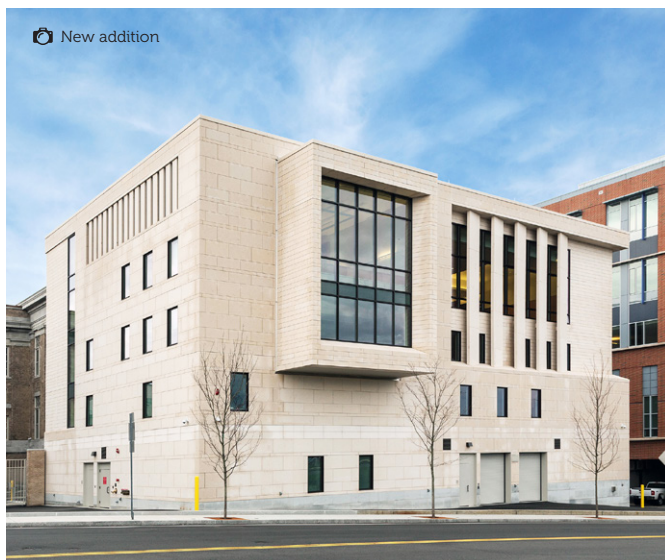
► Preservation Award from Historic Salem, one of America's oldest civic historic preservation groups. The Salem project is an outstanding example of the results that are possible when committed and passionate team members collaborate to create a state-of-the-art facility.

Jonathan Rich praises his construction team. "I would say a key attribute of our firm is its commitment level: our team is incredibly engaged and takes each project they are working on to heart, demonstrating resourcefulness and accountability along the way. In construction, you run into a lot of issues and challenges during the construction process, especially with renovation projects, and I find our firm to be steadfast in working to find a solution."

A culture of client satisfaction and excellence runs deep for W.T. Rich, and the company's mission was to ensure that key stakeholders on the Salem project were not just satisfied with the outcome but ecstatic. The project was also executed with great thoughtfulness for the environment and the surrounding community. There were no complaints from neighbors at any time during the construction. When the city raised a concern regarding the quality and durability of an asphalt patch on Bridge Street that had been installed by one of W.T. Rich's contractors, the team decided to replace the pavement



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for one hundred feet along Bridge Street at no additional cost to the city.

The biggest challenge for W.T. Rich Company is keeping up with the controlled growth of the company without taking on more than it can handle, and that means recruiting experienced talent.

The company does not settle for mediocre employees. Many construction companies have varying worker skill levels – the A teams, the B teams and the C teams. W.T. Rich is committed to only having A teams.

W.T. Rich is a small company but has begun to grow rapidly in the last three years, from fifty-four million in revenue in 2014 to one hundred and thirty million in 2017. During this transition, it is trying to experience the advantages of a larger, professional system while preserving the culture of the family-owned and operated environment. Going from a smaller company with informal processes to a larger, more standardized group, the company has had to ensure that the best practices have been identified.

Consistent processes for managing the firm and overseeing projects is a crucial aspect of its ongoing growth, but adjusting to the change is still an ongoing process. The W.T. Rich team is perpetually mindful of looking for ways to improve upon their proposal and presentation process, which continues to get more sophisticated with well-designed presentations and graphics.

The construction management firm continues to be based on the same values of reliability, integrity and responsiveness

that were provided by Jonathan Rich's father Walter. Jonathan attributes the positive feedback from clients to those values. "We often get feedback from our clients. Many of them have worked with our competitors, and they describe a positive differentiation in terms of their experience with us." ■

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