



COMMERCIAL CONSTRUCTION CASE STUDY:

Boulder Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

Total Renovation and New Construction in Lafayette, CO

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Boulder Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, in Lafayette, Colorado, wanted to renovate its existing space, and construct additional wings, to accommodate a growing congregation. After a falling out with the original general contractor, prior to breaking ground, the church hired Milo Construction to manage the project.

The church worked with an architect on designs for the rectangular building. The drawings added two wings and expanded the space from 6,000 square feet to 14,000 square feet. Inside, plans called for a striking architectural sanctuary, classrooms, office space, and a large kitchen area.



CHALLENGES

The first general contractor the church hired didn't work out, *"One of the things that we consider to be very important is to have a good, trusting, collaborative relationship between the church, the architect, and the builder,"* says Jim Highsmith, co-chair of the church building committee. *"The other builder let us down in that area. We felt like they withheld some information that we really needed so it was kind of a matter of trust at that point. It was difficult to change [builders] at that time, but we really felt like we needed to, and it turned out to be a good move."*

- **Milo Construction took over the build where the original company left off.** The church fired the first contractor at the end of the design phase, leaving Milo to step in just prior to starting construction.
- **A lack of transparency and improper project management from the previous company.** A breakdown in communication, and a failure to collaborate, left the church board feeling uneasy about the build.
- **The power company, severe weather, and Covid threatened to derail the schedule.** Concerns over completing the project on time, while staying on budget, were at the forefront when Milo took over.

SOLUTIONS

According to Highsmith, the church hired Milo Construction after reading good reviews and hearing from past clients that the company was competent, collaborative, and adaptable. *“One of the things about the interaction with Milo is they really did give us a lot of ideas, both from our perspective, and also working with the architect. And we felt we had a really good working relationship between the three parties.”* When inevitable issues arose onsite, Highsmith says, *“We all always managed to get together and solve the problems and move on.”*

- **Quickly getting up to speed.** When the church let the original contractor go, they put the project on hold for three months while they raised additional money for the build. During that time, Milo Construction poured over the architect’s drawings and became familiar with the building specifications, budget, and contractual obligations.
- **Communication and collaboration.** Because Milo Construction was taking over the project from a previous contractor, it was even more important to build trust with the church board. This was accomplished through the pre-design process which includes:
 - Performing preliminary planning and engineering in order to define the project
 - Identifying potential issues and analyzing cost impacts.
 - Outlining the project scope, schedule, and cost to determine the project’s viability, probable schedule, and budget.

According to Highsmith, *“Milo worked well with the architect too, so they would often times solve problems and not even get us involved in it. And so that worked out really well also.”*

- **Innovative ideas and problem solving.** One of the first things Milo Construction did, upon taking over the project, was encourage the church board to immediately put in the application for power. The previous company didn’t do that, so it took nine months for the electricity to work properly. Additional delays included:
 - A heavy snow in November that pushed the parking lot resurfacing back until spring
 - The beginning of the pandemic in March

Highsmith, however, says that Milo Construction kept them on schedule and as close to budget as possible. *“Pat had a lot of ideas about how we might do things a little differently and how we might save some costs. The interaction with Pat and with other people at Milo, in terms of alternate options and solutions, was very good. And that, continued throughout the project.”*



RESULTS

The building committee of the Boulder Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship says they are *“very pleased”* with the renovations and new construction, completed by Milo Construction, and that the congregants are, *“blown away by the new sanctuary.”*

Highsmith says, *“This sanctuary is very architectural, and so it had a lot of things in it that caused some really hard thinking about how we were going to construct it. It’s one thing to draw this on a piece of paper and it’s something else to construct. I think Milo was really good at that, it really tested their ability to construct something that was out of the ordinary.”* After a brief pause, Highsmith finishes his thought, *“Milo is excellent. I thought they did a good spot for us, and I would recommend them entirely.”*