



SOUTH COAST

Improvement Company

Construction • Renovation

Safety, Satisfaction, Expertise



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Written by Allison Dempsey

Founded in 1998 by Tom Quinlan and working across a wide range of industries, South Coast Improvement Company is a leader in commercial design, construction, and management services, starting every pre-construction project by concentrating on the goals and needs of the client and striving to develop a unique solution that surpasses the client's expectations and produces excellent outcomes. Embracing professionalism and a wealth of knowledge, the company prioritizes a seamless, easy experience for every customer while taking satisfaction in effectively and expertly managing unforeseen issues, understanding clients' needs, and abiding by code and compliance.

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To ensure every project is finished on schedule and within budget, a construction manager is on hand to supervise and resolve any potential issues, a key factor for success in the challenging field of occupied renovations in South Coast's many senior living and senior healthcare accounts.

“My brother Tom Quinlan started South Coast Improvement as a commercial painting company, and we evolved it into what we are today, a successful construction management general



contractor,” says President Henry Quinlan, who credits the company’s impressive growth to his brother’s singular focus of keeping clients happy.

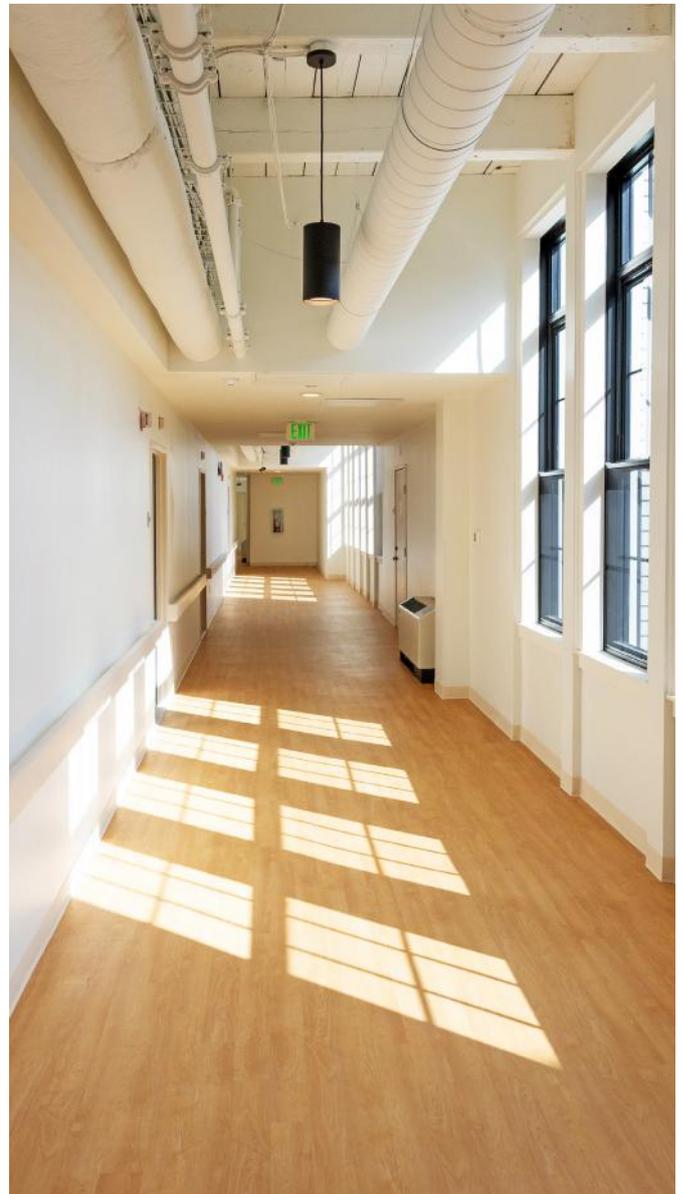
“To please the client, not nickel and dime the client, and build the company up for repeat business is something we’ve been able to do for 27 years by listening to what the client needs,” he says. “The single biggest reason for our success is my brother’s ethos of starting off by satisfying customers.”

A fast-paced company, South Coast prides itself on being both a client-centric and growth-minded business. “We do not portray ourselves as a family; we portray ourselves as a team of professionals,” Quinlan says. “We want people who come in to understand what’s expected of them and work in a professional, clean work environment. We’re performance-based and evaluate our folks based on pure performance. We also want professionals, and we’ve been so fortunate because that’s what we have.”

Those professionals also comprehend the vast importance of focusing on the client, asking the right questions about the goals for the projects, and, of course, really listening. “Whether it’s an estimate for a budget or actually doing the work, we have to adjust our process to make sure we’re meeting their goals. That’s so important.”

As for the company’s continuing success in working in occupied buildings, Quinlan says the key factor is understanding the function of that building, its use, what’s important to the residents, and what’s important to the operators. ▶▶





“Most recently, South Coast worked on its most complicated project to date, a \$24 million fully occupied renovation of an existing senior living affordable housing complex.”

▶ “We always want to make sure the residents are safe and have an ability to do the programming they need on a daily basis,” he adds. “It really goes back to understanding the goal of the client, the purpose of the building, how to be the least disruptive possible, and, most importantly, go as quickly as possible. That’s the biggest thing for us.”

And these projects are not simple. Most recently, South Coast worked on its most complicated project to date, and the one Quinlan is most proud of: Gardner Terrace, a \$24 million fully occupied renovation of an existing senior living affordable housing complex in Attleboro, Massachusetts, taking on eight phases of 12 units per phase and turning them in a seven-week clip.

“We introduced an entire new mechanical system and sprinkler system to the building and did apartment upgrades while the building was fully occupied, which was an amazing feat,” Quinlan says. “We stayed on budget, we stayed on time, and we actually finished a bit early.”

This was a project that spent a year and a half in pre-construction, and South Coast capitalized on this time. One thing that separates South Coast from other firms its size is having a dedicated pre-con department that solely focuses on the planning of the project to properly phase it, including how to get the materials released on time and how to negotiate the contracts, before turning it over to its ops team. “That project, in and of itself, is the best example of our system that I can speak of,” says Quinlan. ▶▶

▶ Working on occupied buildings, he stresses, produces a number of additional unique challenges. “When you work in an occupied building, the building’s already there, along with the mechanical systems from the original construction. It’s a challenge for the design team because they don’t have the luxury of opening up walls and poking around when they’re doing the design phase.”

Either way, the work revolves around a pre-con department, he adds. South Coast goes in and looks at the existing conditions from a constructability and a feasibility standpoint and works within these conditions to head off any unforeseen challenges that may lie behind the walls, above the ceilings, or underneath the flooring.

“There’s no single bigger cost driver and schedule driver than unforeseen conditions, and we do everything in our power during the pre-construction phase to unearth those, so it gives our client the best value on any changes that need to be made,” Quinlan tells us.

South Coast aims to unearth these unforeseen conditions while still negotiating with the trades, incorporating them into the buyout while negotiating the final cost, which can make a big difference not only cost-wise but also from a schedule standpoint by finding issues, proposing solutions, and having

them integrated into the plans so no time is lost to the unknown. “We unearth the unforeseen conditions. We understand how to get distribution for the mechanical systems and the electrical systems from A to B, and it really cuts down on costs and time for the client.”

Indeed, the team’s extensive experience serving senior living, multi-unit dwellings, affordable housing, and hospitality—all focused on occupied settings—has resulted in understanding how to phase projects, how to keep people safe, how to include safe traffic controls, and how to allow the business entity itself to continue to generate revenue. Working across 18 states, the company has recently completed a number of national rebrands of senior living facilities to the tune of about \$1.5 million per building, completed in three to four months, which again speaks to the performance of the company’s pre-con and operators.

A big challenge over the last two years has been dealing with a huge groundswell of work coming out of work delayed due to COVID, especially in occupied spaces. While there was a huge spike in revenue in 2022 and 2023, rising interest rates made it cost-prohibitive for many South Coast clients to have the work done. “We had to pivot to make sure we kept our talent in the seats and were able to continue to generate revenue,” Quinlan says. “We pivoted pretty quickly to occupied public



work and were very thankful and fortunate to have success doing public work in the state of Massachusetts due to, I think, our company's ability to understand and listen to what our clients were telling us."

Now, with interest rates slated to come down and private money activity come back, the company is well poised for 2026.

In terms of milestones, the company's contracted work along with projects in the pipeline are very strong going into 2026, pointing to South Coast breaking through the \$100 million mark in revenue. "That's a big deal to us as a company. When you reach that benchmark, it puts you in a new stratum, with more opportunities for our folks to grow."

Upcoming work includes a number of large, occupied renovations in the senior living and affordable housing space kicking off the first and second quarters, along with expanding its maintenance work. This is the actual work that got South Coast to where it is: refreshing the paint, the carpet, the millwork, and the fixtures. The company will also be expanding its CapEx division, where it can again serve its clients' maintenance needs.

"It's going to solidify the company in this senior living and affordable housing space," says Quinlan. "That type of work is low risk, low competition, with really great returns on client satisfaction."

Having vital maintenance work done while managing to keep facilities open and operating is ideal, and if companies come to South Coast for the work, it can be done easily, giving them one less thing to worry about, he says. "That's really how we built the company. In 2026 we're really making a hard push to expand our CapEx division as well as our construction management services."



But what continues to make South Coast Improvement Company stand out, Quinlan stresses, is its client focus. "I think my brother has done a great job. We have five matrices of success, and they really define what success looks like at South Coast."

The first is ensuring that every job site is kept safe. "Safety is number one. We want everybody going home the way they came to work," Quinlan says. "The second one is, is your client happy? Are they going to use you again? Are they a reference?"

Number three is, as a for-profit business, holding margin and maintaining the margin set in pre-con, and the fourth element is staying on schedule. "Staying on schedule, a safe site, the client's thrilled, we're making money, and then the last one is subcontractors: are they performing? Those are the five things our people can ask themselves every day on their projects."

A lot of people don't know what success means in construction, he adds. "It's a really hard business, and I think my brother did a wonderful job of laying out what that looks like, and we stick to the plan," Quinlan says. "We have clear expectations, a clear definition of success in our pre-construction department, and I really think that separates us from the rest of the industry." ■



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