For women, the construction industry is ripe with opportunity. A recent study showed that although women are still underrepresented in the construction industry overall, they are making significant progress in becoming leaders. A substantial portion of female executives and construction managers have been in their roles in the last five years, suggesting that companies are more recently promoting women to leadership roles. Furthermore, companies and associations are increasing their efforts to promote women in their organizations and educate young women about the benefits of working in the industry.

Although there are obstacles for women to get into construction, women have the potential to solve the industry’s labor shortage. With more and more groundbreaking women chipping away at gendered norms and leveling the playing field, the industry is taking bigger steps at becoming a more diverse and inclusive space for future generations.

In this section, we profile some of the key women paving the way.
Letter from the Publisher

Welcome to the second edition of our annual supplement honoring LA's most influential women in construction and design.

According to labor force statistics, the share of women in the construction industry is only at about 10%, so the women who become standouts in that industry are truly pioneers. There's a way to go for representation in the building game, but the needle is moving, and the industry offers women great opportunities for advancement.

Los Angeles is a national leader when it comes to influential women — and the field of construction is no exception. There are some particularly stellar construction professionals in the Los Angeles region who happen to be women, and we've alphabetically listed some of the best here, along with some basic information about their careers.

Congratulations to the extraordinary trailblazing women who made this list, and thank you for your contributions to Los Angeles' economy … and skyline!

Best regards,

Anna Magaanyan
Publisher & CEO

Diversity is one of the key reasons Lendlease has long held its position as a leading provider of development and construction services.

We congratulate all of the 2020 Outstanding Women in Construction and Design, especially our own Caleigh Raymer.

Congratulations, Caleigh!
Congratulations
CHELSEA COVATE
on being selected as one the
Most Outstanding Women in Construction.

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PENTA proudly congratulates our team member

Diana Eberhard

and all honorees who are a part of 2020’s Outstanding Women in Construction and Design

Outstanding Women in Construction & Design

Megan Calhoun
Vice President
Clark Construction

Megan Calhoun joined Clark Construction 18 years ago as an office engineer. Today, she is a vice president at Clark, and has been involved in some of the company’s most high-profile, award-winning projects. With a portfolio of projects that includes aviation, government, and healthcare, Calhoun’s diverse experience complements her intrinsic knowledge of a rapidly evolving construction industry.

She has been involved in signature projects at Clark, including the Caltrans District 7 Headquarters, LAX Tom Bradley International Terminal Renovations, LAX Central Utility Plant, LAX Delta Enabling Project, and the Los Angeles Federal Courthouse. Megan has been instrumental in providing over $5 billion worth of pursuits and preconstruction projects for Clark’s Western Region. Calhoun’s extensive preconstruction experience has afforded her the ability to see the “big picture” for her clients and ensure that their goals and objectives are met.

Vesna Conroy
Project Executive
Turner Construction Company

Vesna Conroy is a construction project executive with more than 20 years of experience in the design and construction industry. Starting her career as an architect in Belgrade, Serbia, Conroy came to Los Angeles in 2003 as a senior project engineer for Turner Construction Company. Since moving to the Los Angeles area 16 years ago, Conroy has been a driving force working behind the scenes on some of the region’s most complex and iconic building projects. She has a demonstrated history of successfully managing complex multi-billion dollar projects such as the Wilshire Grand Center in downtown Los Angeles and currently the SoFi Stadium and entertainment complex – future home of Los Angeles Rams and Chargers.

Hospitality construction has been a passion for Conroy. With the ability to strike a balance between construction and architecture, she is a valuable partner for owners and architects alike.

Chelsea Covate
Project Manager
W.E. O’Neil Construction Co. of California

Chelsea Covate graduated from UCLA with a B.S. in Civil Engineering in 2011. During her time at UCLA, she interned with W.E. O’Neil, where she found her love for construction and decided to follow this path for her career. She started as a project engineer and worked on a wide range of projects, from small additions at an LAUSD elementary school, to a large hotel/casino expansion at Harrah's So Cal. Her drive and abilities shone through very quickly, which propelled her into an assistant project manager role, and subsequently a project manager role just one assignment later.

After a number of successful projects, Covate’s current project is The Orchards Health Center, a Skilled Nursing and Assisted Living facility in San Juan Capistrano, which is the first ground-up OSHPD project that W.E. O’Neil will have completed in California. The Orchards Health Center is scheduled to complete in September 2020.
AECOM’s Sarah Devine is the vice president of Corporate Workplace for its Buildings + Places practice, part of its Design and Consulting Services group. In her role she is responsible for partnering with corporate real estate professionals in the Los Angeles metro area to design and deliver innovative workplaces. She brings to AECOM 25 years of design, management and strategic planning experience creating solutions for complex corporate workplace environments.

Prior to joining AECOM, Devine was a practice and account leader at Rapt Studio, where she was responsible for establishing and expanding the firm’s Los Angeles practice. Her prior experience includes work with Estein+Baker, HOK and Leo A. Daly. Additionally, she is an active member with CoreNet Global of Southern California and the IIDA and was appointed as the 2017 Communications Chair for the Southern California CoreNet Board of Directors.

Barbara Dunn is a Principal and Studio Director in Gensler’s Los Angeles office. For more than 30 years, she has created innovative environments for well-known clients worldwide, making her a sought-after resource and speaker at design and legal industry conferences. Dunn is one of an elite few designers recognized as a Fellow of the College of Law Practice Management and Fellow of the International Interior Design Association.

She recently received the IIDA Circle of Excellence honor for her dedication to leadership and excellence in interior design. In addition to actively mentoring next-generation talent, she is an Advisory Board Member for the Southern California Chapter of CoreNet Global, and past President of the IIDA Board of Directors. Dunn is also a longtime member and past president of the Board of Trustees for the Santa Monica Museum of Art.

As preconstruction manager for the PENTA Building Group, Diana Eberhard is responsible for determining estimated costs associated with projects, which includes factoring in everything from personnel expenses, time to complete and material and equipment expenses. She also manages the bidding process, where she works closely with subcontractors to ensure they understand the process and have all of the tools and information needed to properly bid. Additionally, Eberhard works with the project managers, marketing, virtual design and construction group, and superintendents for schedules to put full proposal packages together. Eberhard integrates with multiple divisions within PENTA and coordinates heavily with these departments.

Since joining the team in 2016, Eberhard has been instrumental in growing and sustaining PENTA’s preconstruction business in Los Angeles. As a result, the firm now has sufficient revenue filtering through preconstruction, and continues to acquire enough revenue to grow on the operations side.

Build Better with LIUNA and its contractors, who develop industry-specific agreements and provide valuable support to projects before elected officials, regulators, and public forums.

Build Safer with LIUNA and its contractors, who commit more than 500,000 hours of training annually for the 28,000 journeymen, journeywomen, and apprentices throughout Southern California.

Build with LIUNA and its contractors, who raise industry standards, promote quality, and most importantly, protect the bottom line.

SAFE | ON-TIME | UNDER BUDGET
ANNE FLETCHER  
Managing Principal  
HOK

Anne Fletcher leads HOK Los Angeles as Managing Principal, where she is responsible for the strategic direction and overall performance of the multidisciplinary practice. As an architect with over two decades of project management and design experience, she has led teams through significant projects, including dozens of mixed-use, hospitality, residential and transportation projects. Anne has a unique ability to guide teams in translating client priorities, expectations and requirements into elegant, efficient and buildable design solutions.

During her tenure as Managing Principal of HOK’s Los Angeles studio, she has overseen the successful pursuit of numerous projects in the aviation, healthcare, science and technology, and education sectors. The studio’s leadership team has been expanded to enhance the studio’s expertise and visibility in these critical sectors that contribute to the economic and social health of the Los Angeles region.

AMANDA GALLAGHER  
Senior Superintendent  
Pankow Builders

Amanda Gallagher joined Pankow in 2005 as a project engineer where she quickly progressed to an assistant project manager, project manager, and senior project manager. Now as senior superintendent, she is known to face adversity head-on, does what needs to be done and knows what it takes to complete projects successfully. Gallagher is known for training engineers to become true Pankow Warriors within a short period of time. In 2013, due to her knowledge and leadership skills, she was recognized as a Pankow senior associate.

Throughout most of her career with Pankow, Gallagher has grown to become a “specialist” of process orientated projects and repeat clients. From 2009-2014, she became the expert in the construction of PreFast Plantcrafted Buildings, a DSA-approved prefabricated construction solution used to provide two-story education facilities. In addition to her strong intelligence in construction, she is passionate about world travel and community involvement.

KIM GRANT  
Project Executive  
Hathaway Dinwiddie

Kim Grant is a project executive at Hathaway Dinwiddie who has spent over 37 years working in the construction industry. She graduated from the USC School of Engineering with a Civil Engineering degree and is a licensed CA Professional Engineer. She is also LEED AP and DBIA Certified.

Grant has worked in design and construction in several markets, including commercial building, non-profits, aviation and education. She has collaborated with owners and designers from preconstruction through project closeout. Her passion for developing high performing teams has led her to communications skills training and working as an industry advisor for Cal Poly Pomona and Industry Liaison on the Executive Board for the USC Construction Alumni Group.

Great People make for a Great Company

Congratulations to our very own Megan Calhoun on being named one of LA Business Journal’s Most Outstanding Women in Construction!

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR OWN
MITRA MEMARI
and all of the 2020 Most Outstanding Women in Construction and Design

www.clarkconstruction.com
Jan Karl has been with Morley Builders for close to six years and has left an indelible imprint on the company – especially in the advancement of women. Karl is a senior leader who has truly pioneered mentoring and supporting of women at all levels of the organization. She excels in her guiding of young project engineers and managers to be successful in a male dominant field. She truly takes as much pride in the success of a female, construction colleague as she does in the awarding of a new project to Morley.

In the past year, Karl has secured the largest concrete project in Morley history – the Conrac project at LAX. While most business development personnel would focus solely on high profile projects such as this, Karl ensures that Morley Builders continues to aggressively pursue several projects each year in the low-income housing sector.

Emily Kay’s collection of hardhats hang proudly on display along a wall in her father’s home. The collection, which documents her 25 years in the construction industry, tracks her career path, from concrete laborer to her role today as project executive with Balfour Beatty. It’s a story that exemplifies a willingness to try new things, a focus on learning and development, and above all an overarching passion for working with people and building enduring relationships.

With the field experience and construction knowledge Kay earned through her internships and summer jobs held consistently through those five years, she worked her way up the ladder; from laborer, to field layout engineer, to project engineer, assistant superintendent, and today, the sole female project executive overseeing construction in Los Angeles County for one of the largest construction companies nationwide and internationally, Balfour Beatty.

In her current role as Smart Lab Director for Suffolk Construction in Los Angeles, Erin Khan serves the Southern California region by driving operational excellence through data analytics, process innovation and technology implementation. Since the Smart Lab’s opening in early 2019, Khan has spent the last year leading the industry by working to source, test and evaluate groundbreaking technology to improve overall operational excellence. A recent example of this is her efforts to experiment with startups that provide enhanced site communication through augmented and virtual reality application integrations. Furthermore, in Los Angeles she leads improvements on construction operations pain point resolution by pairing high-impact, on-site work sessions with field personnel alongside back-end data analytics to deliver the best solutions at the right time.

Khan continually improves the industry by inspiring the next generation of the workforce to choose a career in construction through exposure to technology.
MITRA MEMARI
Partner
ZGF

Born in Iran, Mitra Memari emigrated to the US when she was a teenager. Her experiences adapting as a minority female in a new country fostered a strong passion for diversity, inclusion, and equity – a passion woven into all aspects of her life, from her professional work at ZGF where she is a partner, to her substantial volunteer work.

Memari has more than 25 years of industry experience and approaches each of her projects with diversity, inclusion, and collaboration top of mind. Her skills in guiding multidisciplinary teams and disparate client and user groups to consensus across complex, multi-year projects is not just relied upon but sought out by clients including USC, The University of Arizona, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, City of Hope, and University Health System (UHS). Memari is currently the project manager for a new women’s and children’s hospital tower for UHS in San Antonio, a $1 billion project.

HEATHER NIELSEN
Project Manager
Webcor

2019 was a big year for Heather Nielsen, a Webcor project manager who recently transitioned from the industry-leading builder’s concrete division (Webcor Concrete) to its general contractor side (Webcor Builders). In April, the mom of three achieved a major professional milestone by topping out her first project as concrete project manager: The Four Seasons Los Angeles. This was no small feat, as the 379,486-square-foot high-rise had been in the works for over 10 years. Immediately afterward, she began an estimating rotation for the concrete division, during which she assisted the preconstruction department in full take-offs and pricing on a wide variety of projects in Los Angeles and San Francisco.

Nielsen worked on the concrete side of construction for over eight years before transitioning roles. For the last few years, she has worked on the controls side as a project manager, which involves managing schedules, pricing, contracts, and negotiations.

ASHLEY PECK
Director of Culture and Communications
Pankow Builders

Ashley joined Pankow in 2012 as a Marketing Coordinator, where she quickly progressed into the role of Marketing and Communications Manager. In 2018, due to her knowledge and leadership skills, Ashley was recognized as a Pankow senior associate. Peck is pushing the envelope in how a construction company develops strategies to communicate internally, connecting employees to Pankow’s mission and vision, inviting them to come along on the journey to becoming a learning organization. Continually expanding her visibility and leadership, she was recently promoted to the director of culture and communications. Peck is responsible for the development and implementation of Pankow’s strategic goals and cultural initiatives related to developing thoughtful internal and external communications and leading the company’s strategic goal to become a learning organization specifically related to integrating human and organizational performance principles into processes and programs.
Oracle Expands Innovation Lab to Advance Growth for Construction Industries

Oracle and partners apply latest technology to help construction, communications, and utility companies spark growth

Oracle is expanding its Chicago Innovation Lab, empowering more organizations to explore new technologies and strategies to bolster their digital transformation efforts. Since its successful launch last year, the Lab has helped construction organizations explore and test solutions from Oracle and the larger construction ecosystem in a simulated worksite environment. Today, Oracle is planning for an extended facility and broadening the scope of the newly named Oracle Industries Innovation Lab to feature additional partners and technologies to solve complex business issues and accelerate customer success across more verticals.

“We are at an inflection point with technology as the digital and physical worlds continue to blur for our customers across all industries,” said Mike Sicilia, senior vice president and general manager, Global Business Units, Oracle. “This expanded Lab environment gives our customers and partners a place to co-innovate with tools and technologies that yield operational improvements and empowers them to use data to create new business opportunities and revenue streams. We’re coming together to help redefine the future for these industries.”

The Lab has already welcomed more than 650 visitors, including best-in-class technology partners, customers and industry thought leaders. There, they have worked together in a realistic worksite environment to test how leading-edge solutions such as connected devices, autonomous vehicles, drones, augmented reality, visualization, and artificial intelligence tools can positively impact the construction industry. Moving forward, the Lab will also feature simulated environments including Utility and Communication solutions. Oracle Utilities will explore new concepts driving the future of energy. Lab demonstrations and real-world modeling will range from better managing loads on the grid with distributed energy resources, such as solar, wind and electric vehicles; to using artificial intelligence, IoT and digital-twin technologies to improve network operations and speed outage restoration; to optimizing connections with smart home devices to engage and serve customers, while bolstering the health of the grid with better demand planning. The Lab will also highlight how water, gas and electric utilities can leverage the latest technology to manage and enhance their construction efforts and minimize disruptions during site enhancements, maintenance and upgrades.

Oracle Communications enables both mobile in-app and web-based digital engagement using contextual voice, HD video and screen sharing capabilities through its Oracle Live Experience Cloud. The Oracle Live Experience Cloud directly enables enterprises in the E&C industry to modernize customer experience and field service using enhanced digital engagement channels.

The use cases being demonstrated at the Lab will let customers simulate real-time collaboration on large construction models with massive amounts of data over a high-speed, low-latency 5G network.

The Oracle Cloud offers a complete suite of integrated applications for Sales, Service, Marketing, Human Resources, Finance, Supply Chain and Manufacturing, plus Highly Automated and Secure Generation 2 Infrastructure featuring the Oracle Autonomous Database. For more information about Oracle, please visit oracle.com.

Caleigh Raymer began her career in construction in 2008 after graduating from North Carolina University. When the recession hit the company she was working for, causing the firm to lose nearly a 1/3 of its staff, Raymer stepped in as dual role of both project manager and chief estimator at the age of 24. Raymer then moved to Los Angeles at the age of 26 and was quickly promoted to chief estimator overseeing the Change Management Group at LAX International.

Today, Raymer is the director of operations vice president for the Los Angeles region of Lendlease. Overseeing operations and preconstruction on all jobs in planning and execution for the office. At Lendlease, Raymer's passion is the development of her people. She believes that a business is only as strong as the employees that are on the jobs so it is very important, if not critical to build her teams up.

April Stock is responsible for setting the strategy, goals, and execution plan for the division, leading a team of 35 people in the office and field, including project executives, project managers, and superintendent – many who are male and some with more years of experience. In an industry that's only 9% female, Stock has established herself as a leader and expert with both the technical and business acumen to successfully lead a division.
Not for Everyone: Profile of a Trailblazer

By CHAD WRIGHT

Working in the construction trades is not a reality explored by many people consider, especially women. In fact, only about 3% of people working in the trades are women. That number jumps to about 15% if you include managerial positions, engineers, administrative staff, etc. In such a male-dominated industry, women have to do something to stand out. Katherine “Kat” Nørre has figured out that something.

While working as the executive assistant to the chief executive officer of a public relations firm, Kat knew she needed more. Kat knew that working as a union tradeswoman would provide that opportunity. “I had a nice office window at the PR firm, but always felt like I wanted to be outside. I made good money back then, but not the money I’m making now plus the benefits like a pension for retirement.”

Through a non-profit training program, Women in Non-Traditional Employment Roles (WINTER), Kat found her way into Laborers Union (LIUNA) Local 300 as an apprentice in 2012. WINTER provides ten weeks of pre-apprenticeship training and exposure to career options in the building trades. “I decided to join the LIUNA because of all the job opportunities they had available, how supportive they are of women, and because of all the classes they have at the training center in Anaqua,” said Kat. “For me this is where I wanted to be, in the area of women, and because of all the classes they had available, how supportive they were of women. In fact, only about 3% of people working in the trades are women. That number jumps to about 15% if you include managerial positions, engineers, administrative staff, etc. In such a male-dominated industry, women have to do something to stand out.”

Kat’s first concern was the safety of women on the jobsite. “I worry about safety a lot. It’s something that’s always in the back of my mind. I want to make sure everyone is safe.” Kat is now an apprentice in the Laborers Union. The program comes at a time when 80% of the apprentices are women. In fact, only about 3% of women work in the construction industry. “I want to continue its programs. Kat also encourages women to follow her path into the trades. “I try to tell them how it is in the field, what they are getting themselves into,” Kat said when speaking of WINTER candidates. In fact, Kat became a role model for her own daughter Genesis who is now an apprentice in the Laborers Union.

Kat’s next stop was a top-pound for Regional Connector Constructors (RCC), building the $1.75 billion underground Regional Connector Transit Project for LA Metro. Kat was the first female employee on the project. “I’m a woman out here and I don’t want to be looked at differently,” Kat stated. “I have to be toe-to-toe with these guys even if we’re out here shoveling for eight hours.” As a top-pounder Kat’s primary responsibility is to work with the crane operator to rig materials for hoisting into the tunnel, but also to keep the yard running smoothly and ensure supplies and equipment are maintained for the jobsite.

As she got more experience under her belt, Kat found her way into Laborers Union (LIUNA) Local 300, a “top-pounder” for Regional Connector Constructors (RCC), working at the Regional Connector Transit Project in downtown Los Angeles. Local 300 recognized Kat’s ability to handle herself in a male-dominated industry. She is the shop steward for the Regional Connector project, which employed 100 Labors at its peak. A shop steward acts a facilitator and mediator to troubleshoot any labor-management problems that might arise on the jobsite. “I take that real seriously,” Kat said of her steward responsibilities. “Once every few weeks, I’ll walk the jobsite and talk to the guys. I communicate to them, that if they have any problems, reach out, I’m just a phone call away.”

Before Kat could even indenture as a Laborer apprentice she had to pass a rigorous week of evaluation known as ‘boot camp’ in which all candidates are put through a series of physical demands to see if they have what it takes to work in the trade. “I watched a lot of men tap out and just walk away,” said Kat. “I can’t give up, I have four children depending on me.” She resolved to finish the boot camp. “My heart was set on becoming a Laborer.” After the trial week was done and she became a Laborer apprentice, Kat stated, “It was the best feeling I’ve ever had! It’s been an amazing journey for me.”

Now, Kat gives back to the industry. In 2016 she became a board member for WINTER, participating in monthly meetings and fundraisers to ensure the non-profit has the funds it needs to continue its programs. Kat also encourages women to follow her path into the trades. “I try to tell them how it is in the field, what they are getting themselves into,” Kat said when speaking of WINTER candidates. In fact, Kat became a role model for her own daughter Genesis who is now an apprentice in the Laborers Union. “My daughter has thick skin, she’s going to make it out here.”

Chad Wright is a director at the Laborers-Employers Cooperation and Education Trust Southwest (LECET Southwest). LECET Southwest is a partnership between the Laborers International Union of North America (LIUNA) and its affiliate contractors to secure projects and jobs, increase market share, and advance market-related interests throughout the states of California, Arizona, and New Mexico. Learn more by visiting lcecsouthwest.org.

Autodesk and AGC to Provide Custom-Fitting Safety Harnesses for Women

Construction technology provider and national trade organization launch grant program to help address industry need

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), falls are the leading cause of private sector worker fatalities in the construction industry. Everyone who works at heights, whether it’s on a roof, scaffolding, or the edge of a tall building, should have properly fitting safety harnesses, yet not all contractors have the supply they need to better protect women in construction. To help address this, Autodesk is funding grant program with one of the largest construction trade organizations – the Associated General Contractors of America (AGC) – to supply select, in-need member contractors with fall protection harnesses sized for women who work at heights.

The program comes at a time when 80 percent of construction firms report having a hard time filling the hourly craft positions that represent the bulk of the construction workforce. Women represent approximately 10 percent of the overall construction labor force, with even lower representation in trades positions, and one of the largest demographics with the potential to fill the gap in labor. To help attract and retain more women in the field, job sites need to recognize and meet the needs of a gender-diverse workforce, including properly sized and comfortable PPE.

“The construction industry agrees safety must be everyone’s priority, but we also need to recognize when safety needs aren’t being met for some workers. Technology is improving job site safety, but it’s not a silver bullet,” said Allison Scott, director, Autodesk Construction Solutions. “Construction is – and will continue to be – a people-driven business. The industry needs more people, and women must feel safe and welcome on job sites if we want them to choose a career in construction. Ultimately, when we address safety for women, we improve safety for everyone.”

Ill-fitting PPE can range from uncomfortable to downright dangerous. For example, a fall protection harness that’s too loose may still catch a woman when the scaffolding collapses, but it could seriously injure her neck or shoulders in the process. This not only affects the injured worker, but her employer as well. The contractor incurs lost time, productivity and – potentially – a costly worker’s compensation claim.

“One of the most effective ways to successfully recruit more women into high-paying construction career opportunities is to make sure firms are able to provide safety equipment that makes them even safer,” said Stephen E. Sandherr, the chief executive officer of the Associated General Contractors of America. “We want to leverage these grants to encourage our member firms to help wider range of the construction workforce. The tool is to expand the diversity of our workforce.”

Autodesk works to ensure the continued success of the commercial construction industry by advocating for support for federal, state, and local governments to provide opportunities for firms to learn about ways to become more accomplished and connecting them with the resources and information they need to be successful business and corporate citizens.

Autodesk makes software for people who make things. If you’ve ever driven a high-performance car, admired a towering skyscraper, used a smartphone, or watched an incredible film, chances are you’ve experienced what millions of Autodesk customers are doing with our software. Autodesk gives you the power to make anything. For more information visit autodesk.com or follow @autodesk.

The Associated General Contractors of America works to ensure the continued success of the commercial construction industry by advocating for support for federal, state, and local governments to provide opportunities for firms to learn about ways to become more accomplished and connecting them with the resources and information they need to be successful business and corporate citizens.