



### Biz in brief

**Company:** Surepath Construction

**Founder:** Andrew Messinger

**Founded:** 2007

**Employees:** 3

**Headquarters:** Marlboro

# Building connections

Marlboro-based Surepath helps companies navigate complicated steps in development process

BY ANDREW SHELDON

Here's the first thing you need to know about **Surepath Construction**, a small, family-run business in Marlboro approaching its 10th anniversary: It doesn't actually do any construction.

Here's the second thing you need to know about Surepath Construction: If your business is looking to do an addition, and you don't know anything about the construction process, you might want to call them.

At least that's the way founder and principal **Andrew Messinger** sees it.

After nearly two decades in the construction business, Messinger felt there was a need for a company that could help others through the development process, so he went out on his own.

Surepath, Messinger said, is in the business of facilitating construction.

"We'll do estimates and do bid out the job for them because, surprisingly, companies don't really have a good construction-bidding process," he said. "We write all the bidding documents, analyze the bids."

Sometimes, the process stops there, Messinger said, but, often times, Surepath's involvement continues.

"The client either doesn't have the personnel or doesn't build that kind of project a lot, and they'd like us to stay on board," he said. "What we do then is help them run their construction project as, really, an extension of their company."

Surepath also aids early in the process by logistically deciding where trucks enter the site and staging the construction, but it can also provide input as early as the design stage.

"We're in early design and conceptual meetings, and we're able to give input about the most effective way of doing things," he said. "We try to help guide our clients and design team to what the proper thing is."

Messinger said these conversations are where his team's experience can really pay off for its clients.

"Sometimes, designers have their own vision for what something should be, whether it conforms to what their clients are looking for or not," he said. "Sometimes, it's a difficult balance of making sure all those different things meet the requirements of what your client is looking to bid."

Surepath would not release revenue numbers, but Messenger says he is making money, something that wasn't so certain when he left a secure senior position at **Turner Construction** to go out on his own. He did so at a time that turned out to be one of the worst years to start a company: 2007. Or right before the economic downturn.

"I'd always wanted to own my own company and I decided the time was right," Messinger said. "Everyone said I was crazy and, had I known what was going to happen with the crash, I probably would not have left."

"But I did and just rolled the dice."

Surepath itself is small, still just three people after nearly 10 years in business, but Messinger said that has its benefits, such as very low overhead.

"It was all self-funded, which sounds very impressive, but there wasn't a lot of funding there anyway," he said.

It also makes the company pliable and nimble when accepting jobs, even to the point of adopting a company's practices to ease the process.

"We're able to conform to how our clients want us to do business," he said. "Sometimes, we're able to use their systems or forms they have and we don't have to say, 'No, we only do things this way' like some of the bigger companies might say."

Messinger cites this ability as a characteristic that helped navigate the difficult first years of being a new company during a sluggish economy.

"I think we actually, unfortunately, benefited from the economy because there were projects that were

ongoing and bigger companies had started laying off some of their staff," he said, "but they still needed work done."

"Here we were, a professional construction company that could run jobs and, after the contract was up, we would just go away," he said. "So, I started getting calls for these little jobs that had to be done where they'd laid off most of their in-house construction personnel."

"And I think that's how we survived."

Even though the company was able to navigate the industry during its first years, it wasn't until 2010 that Messinger knew his company had made it.

He'd received a phone call from an old client at Turner Construction who needed representation on a large project.

It was **Novartis**, and the project was the expansion of its large campus in East Hanover.

"They did a full campus expansion and I was called very early to help with that," he said. "They could literally hire anybody that they wanted and they hired me, so that was one of those 'Wow' moments."

That type of business development isn't unusual for Surepath.

After nearly 10 years in business, Surepath Construction still finds jobs the old fashioned way: by reputation.

"We don't have a marketing budget, we don't do interviews," he said. "So, all of our work is through word-of-mouth, through people that have worked with us who recommend us to somebody else."

To back up the reputation, Messinger said, there's a confidence in the abilities and experience of his small staff.

"We're very highly trained and professional, and a lot of the small companies aren't like that," he said. "We have a different background and are able to do things that other companies can't."