

RIPA & Associates

Behind-the-scenes in Tampa's Economic Explosion

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RIPA & Associates (RIPA) is an experienced and successful privately owned civil and utility construction company that has been developing the greater Tampa, Fla., area since 1998. Successfully completing hundreds of commercial, residential, industrial and public sector construction projects in Pinellas, Hillsborough, Hernando, Citrus, Pasco, Manatee, Polk, Hardee, Orange, Lee and Sarasota counties, the company is one of the area's most prestigious in its sector.

In less than two decades RIPA has grown to more than 200 employees and its unwavering commitment to unparalleled expertise and superior customer service has contributed to the company being chosen as a strategic partner on site development and infrastructure projects that are invaluable to the region.

“Since we started back in 1998 we've experienced tremendous growth over the years, and one of the main reasons is our emphasis on customer service and professional relationships,” asserts Chris LaFace, president of RIPA. “It has been a real focus and strength of the company throughout the years to keep the client in mind and not cut corners and do things right.”

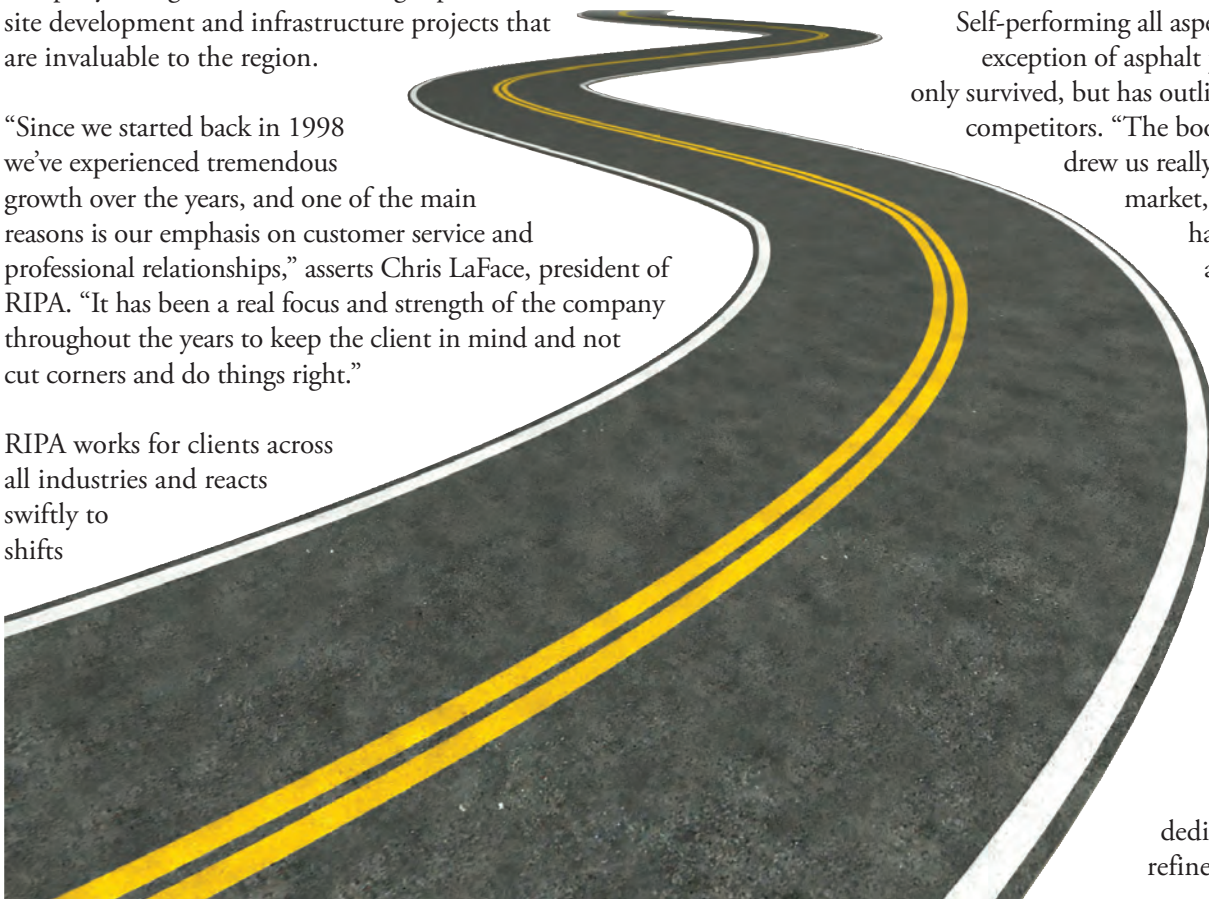
RIPA works for clients across all industries and reacts swiftly to shifts

in the marketplace. “We are really undertaking a variety of project types right now,” reflects LaFace. “We have clients in residential subdivisions, healthcare, multifamily residential development and roadway infrastructure. Simply put, we move dirt, install utility infrastructure in the ground and build roadways, which are services that traverse the entire construction industry. Virtually any kind of development requires at least one of these services, so we're not really confined to working in only one or two market segments, and that this has really helped us survive the recession after the collapse in 2008.”

Quality Services, Solutions and Value

Self-performing all aspects of work, with the exception of asphalt paving, RIPA has not only survived, but has outlived most of its major competitors. “The boom of the early 2000s drew us really into the commercial market, but now the markets have shifted and we are actually doing a lot of work for apartment complexes being built,” says LaFace. “This is a very positive development, because we've experienced tremendous fallout among companies in our area.”

The company's unswerving determination and dedication to continuous refinement of its proactive



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environmental, health and safety culture are only some of the reasons the firm has survived. According to LaFace, a key component of the company's approach is the ability of the field superintendents and project managers to adapt to any circumstance, coordinating services including: clearing, grading and excavation; water, storm, sewer, fire line, force main and lift stations; and FDOT-certified, asphalt, paving, concrete, curb and sidewalks construction.

"When we go onto a work site, we're really mindful of the fact that we're not the only team working," affirms LaFace. "We will usually go in first to do the earthwork and maybe some utility work, but after a month or two usually the other crews come in. We will always reach a certain point in the work where their work takes precedence and requires more time, so we will shift our focus to working on the external areas out of their way, or if we have to we will simply come back and finish out work once they're done."

Keeping Up with Growing Market Sectors

RIPA provides its technical expertise to local governments, institutions and developers, routinely completing projects in the range of \$250,000 to \$10 million, and even in excess of \$20 million. RIPA is currently part of another major development of the healthcare industry in the greater Tampa area.



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“We are working at the new Wesley Chapel Medical Center that broke ground earlier this year,” says LaFace. “It is a nice-sized project job for us because it was a completely virgin piece of land. We’re turning this space from pasture to a state-of-the-art medical center. We’ll be digging all of the dirt, doing all of the sewer, storm drainage and water lines as well as building all interior roadways and parking lots.”

The new medical center is one of a number of healthcare institutions under construction or expansion in Pasco County and will ultimately contribute another valuable 80 beds to the healthcare system.

Even with such a strong financial foundation, RIPA is forced to battle many of the same challenges other companies across the nation have been facing. “Fuel price fluctuation is a major issue for us right now. We have 150 pieces of equipment we operate, so when there’s a spike in the price of fuel, like we have seen over the past few months, the effects are not exactly desirable,” laughs LaFace. He remains optimistic about the Tampa region’s recovery, however.

”I worry sometimes what the world can possibly throw at us next, but I do think our area is beginning to rebound,” says



LaFace. “We are always looking at other companies or types of businesses whose work intersects with ours and I could see us maybe branching into those areas at some point. In any case, I think Florida is definitely beginning to rebound. There are just too many good things about Florida for it not to. It’s just a desirable place.”

RIPA has successfully completed hundreds of civil construction projects, rightfully earning its reputation. With Central Florida’s market back on the rise, RIPA & Associates is set to further enhance its notable status. •

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