

Building belonging through dignified on-site restroom facilities

■ Modern temporary bathrooms provide improvements in sanitation and hygiene, build equity between craft and admin employees, improve morale, and make construction sites more inclusive and enjoyable.

By **KELLY PRATT**
DPR Construction

Imagine your only workplace restroom option was a porta-potty, and you had to share it with dozens or hundreds of colleagues. Would you want to use it?

If you're a construction worker, this is likely your only option.

While construction workers across America still use portable chemical toilets on-site, progressive companies are moving toward providing modern temporary bathrooms with power, running water, toilets and sinks.



Pratt

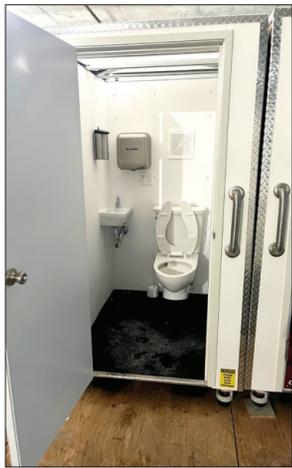
Due to insufficient utilities, space, or budget constraints, construction companies often provide their field workforce with chemical portable toilets. However, these facilities barely meet sanitation standards. Extreme hot and cold temperatures make them uncomfortable to use, and they quickly degrade as they're exposed to the environment and abused by users. They also create divisions between craft and admin employees who can access better, more hygienic facilities.

Modern temporary bathrooms provide noticeable improvements in sanitation and hygiene. They also help build equity between craft and admin employees, improve morale, and make construction sites a more inclusive and enjoyable environment to work in.

Each is crucial as the construction industry grapples with a workforce shortage.

If you've been to an outdoor wedding or concert or flown on a plane, you're likely already familiar with temporary bathrooms. In addition to an actual toilet, they have heating and cooling capabilities, flush waste away, and provide built-in hand-washing capabilities — basics for the office or remote workers, but considered luxurious on-site.

While the switch to temporary bathrooms is relatively new in the United States, our counterparts in Canada were early adopters. In 2015, the Quebec government approved a new rule requiring construction sites with more than 25 workers to install heated washrooms with running water. This year, the British Columbia Ministry of Labour extended these requirements to projects within their province.



New temporary bathrooms include toilets, sinks with running water, heating and cooling, and privacy.

DPR Construction began evaluating the transition in 2021. At our Southline project in South San Francisco, the team learned that renting temporary bathroom facilities and connecting them to existing utilities was similar in cost to renting and servicing portable chemical toilets. The return on this investment is improved hygiene and sanitation, increased morale and enhanced safety.

I spoke with Jack Poindexter, DPR's Northwest Region Leader, who shared that while touring the Southline project, our craft team members repeatedly commented on how great it was to have access to these facilities. "You could feel their pride — they want to work here."

These results and reactions from the craft workforce spurred other projects to switch to temporary bathrooms. With repeated successes, DPR mandated that all construction projects in its Northwest region (California Bay Area to

Seattle) provide fully functional temporary restroom facilities at all job sites regardless of workforce size.

DPR made this decision because we feel it's the right thing to do. My colleague, Pacific Northwest Business Unit Leader Andy Hill, shared, "It's about dignity. Providing craft and on-site workers with the same facilities as admin employees shows them that we care about them and that their well-being matters."

Northwest region leader Poindexter echoed those sentiments.



Temporary bathrooms can easily be placed on-site in various configurations and are connected directly to the building's plumbing. Photos courtesy of DPR Construction



Large projects can support temperature controlled temporary bathrooms, providing relief and comfort throughout the year.

"We want everyone entering our job sites to feel valued, feel a sense of belonging, and be psychologically safe," said Poindexter. "We believe that by taking a step forward in improving jobsite working conditions, we can provide for our craft and help heighten their sense of belonging and instill a greater sense of pride in their work."

For years, the construction industry has sought to recruit and include more women in our industry but has never provided facilities and resources that meet their needs. The lack of operable toilets is a significant obstacle for women interested in construction. The new bathroom facilities are already helping solve this problem and creating an environment where women are comfortable working.

My colleague Megan Pifer, Self Perform Work project manager, said it best: "As a woman in con-

struction, bathroom options are important. Knowing that there is a clean and comfortable environment meant just for women makes us feel valued and included."

On the project I led, we installed new bathrooms on every other floor of the 11-story tower, which increased efficiency by eliminating trips to the ground floor. But, more importantly, we found that once installed, they immediately broke down the barriers between the craft and admin women on the jobsite.

One example occurred during Women in Construction Week. Some of our female team members used the private space to leave each other affirmations and encouragement. We wouldn't have done this in the previous bathrooms; we just wanted to get out of there. Remarkably, what were once places of graffiti are now places of respect and support.

Another example of inclusion, and often overlooked, is that the portable restrooms provide religious employees with a space to prepare for their daily prayers. Before praying, followers of the Muslim faith are required to wash themselves of minor impurities in a specific order. When water isn't present, they can symbolically "cleanse" their hands and face.

This is easy if you're based in an office but challenging on-site. The new restrooms alleviate the stress of finding a private or off-site place to complete their ritual washing and proceed with their daily prayers.

Unsurprisingly, the new temporary bathrooms are a hit with everyone working on-site and for previously reluctant visitors.

Aside from the apparent benefits to productivity and quality of life, we are confident that adopting these new restrooms

will continue to improve morale while simultaneously creating a more just, equitable and inclusive environment on-site.

Construction is often perceived as being behind the times. I think that's unfair. While on-site, I see people using technology like robots and tablets to facilitate new construction approaches, such as new forms of prefabrication, virtual design and construction and more. We're not in the same industry as a generation ago.

It's past time to provide skilled workers in the field with dignified bathroom facilities. It's the right thing to do, and it shows that construction is an industry where everyone is valued and belongs.

Kelly Pratt is a project executive with DPR Construction and focuses on Life Science projects in the Seattle area.

'It's about dignity. Providing craft and on-site workers with the same facilities as admin employees shows them that we care about them and that their well-being matters.'

Andy Hill

DPR Construction's Pacific Northwest business unit leader

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Unlocking the full potential of belonging in construction

■ *Build with Pride Seattle believes that recognizing and supporting identity-based community fosters a sense of belonging and resource sharing that strengthens both individuals and the industry.*

By **KABRI LEHRMAN-SCHMID and COURTNEY WISE**
Special to the Journal

The drive for inclusion in the construction industry is accelerating, driven by the need to secure a sustainable workforce and the growing awareness that harmful stereotypes undermine the industry's image and hurt employee retention. Belonging has emerged as a central framework for building inclusion, emphasizing the need for safe, supportive environments where individuals feel valued, connected and free to be themselves.



Lehrman-Schmid



Wise

Build with Pride Seattle (BWPS), a new non-profit organization serving the LGBTQIA+ and allied members of the AEC industry in Washington, was founded to emphasize this very topic. Built around the idea of community belonging, the organization's founders saw the need to create a supportive network for personal connection and hub for shared industry resources.

Co-founder Kabri Lehrman-Schmid (she/her), a superintendent with Hensel Phelps, explains, "Construction is naturally inclusive - we connect expertise across diverse skillsets and uphold shared values like pride-of-work. What's missing, however, are the personal connections and support networks that come from meaningful communities. Marginalized groups in our industry need reasons to stay and tools to thrive if we're to expect lasting change."

LGBTQIA+ BELONGING IS ESSENTIAL

Estimates suggest the LGBTQIA+ community makes up just 2% of the construction industry, with many remaining unseen due to fear and barriers to being open. This isolation limits access to support, role models and opportunities, impacting personal growth and making retention and engagement difficult. It also hinders the industry's ability to attract diverse talent.

Supporting identity-based communities like BWPS and initiatives like Construction Inclusion Week highlights the importance of workforce diversity. These resources help individuals navigate bias and shape paths for success.

Courtney Wise (she/her), co-founder of BWPS and marketing manager at JTM Construction, shared the success of BWPS' inaugural Pride event in June 2024. "We expected 100 attendees, but demand was so high we had to expand the room; it showed the need for belonging in the industry." Over 200 people from 85 AEC companies attended, many feeling acknowledged for the first time in their careers.

A FOUNDATION OF SAFETY

Conversations about inclusion in construction often highlight psychological safety as key to fostering belonging. It builds on shared beliefs, contributions and a team's capacity for learning

together, encouraging open communication and allowing workers to express their experiences and needs. This safety strengthens their sense of belonging, while its absence can lead to disengagement or disconnection.

For marginalized groups, especially LGBTQIA+ individuals, psychological safety is critical. An acknowledged community can provide resources that foster a renewed dedication to the profession.

Ryan Ames (he/him), senior vice president of Compass Construction, was amazed and proud to participate in the AEC industry's commitment to LGBTQIA+ and allied members at BWPS' June gathering. "Moments like these remind us how much representation matters," he reflected. "Walking into a crowded room of strangers and feeling an immediate sense of connection is something I've rarely experienced at other industry events."

TRADESPeople WILL BENEFIT

Inclusion has been a challenge in construction, due in part to the historic biases that have led to in-group hiring practices and unwelcoming working conditions. A 2017 LGBTQIA+ survey by Construction News revealed that 54% of respondents did not feel comfortable being open about their sexuality or gender on site. When workers don't feel they belong, they're more likely to leave the industry.

Jai Briar (he/him), education supervisor at the Construction Industry Training Council of Washington reflects, "For tradespeople, the resilience needed to establish themselves in the face of bias and harassment deserves support and validation. A visible and accessible LGBTQIA+ network can provide an apprentice skills and training that are not always freely offered at the jobsite."

Creating opportunities for connection can transform the experience for young recruits. Briar adds, "As someone responsible for transitioning students into the industry, it's discouraging to see the loss of talent when queer and transgender tradespeople can't find a safe space to grow their careers."

COMPANIES HAVE OPTIONS

In the construction industry, belonging takes on several forms, reflecting the unique culture, work environment and business challenges. Organizations have internal and external pathways to consider:

Inclusive jobsite culture: Jobsites offer a critical opportunity to foster and uphold inclusive values and behavior. Leadership plays a key role in embedding inclusion into every aspect of jobsite culture, while individuals learn that their daily interactions are essential in

building a strong, inclusive community.

"I've seen firsthand how poor communication and ignoring input can lead to project delays and crew conflicts," says Eliot Hills (he/him), senior project engineer at BNBuilders and co-founder of BWPS. "When I prioritize listening, trust and creating a safe space, I've seen crews quickly recover from delays and start working together. Building an inclusive jobsite community is key to success."

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs): Employee-led groups unite employees with shared characteristics, experiences,



Over 200 people from 85 AEC companies attended Build with Pride Seattle's inaugural pride event in June.

Photos courtesy of Build with Pride Seattle

or interests to provide support, networking, and advocacy while advising leadership on improving engagement.

Account Manager Kim Scavotto (they/she), describes how ERGs can amplify the voices of marginalized communities, "As co-leader of the McKinstry Pride Alliance, I've witnessed the powerful impact of creating safe spaces where people can be their authentic selves. While traditional change management can be slow, these employee-led groups are able to quickly adapt to employees' needs, offering essential support."

Community Organizations and Events: Safe spaces offer resources for LGBTQIA+ and allied professionals seeking community connection. Companies can advocate for employee participation or partner with industry organizations building those networks.

"Developing new partnerships between existing resources is an essential way BWPS is facilitating the growth of a successful community and increasing safety in our region," says Lehrman-Schmid.

During their Construction Inclusion Week kickoff event on October 10th, BWPS celebrated the creation of a scholarship fund



Many attendees reported feeling acknowledged for the first time in their careers.

that connects the membership network of the Greater Seattle Business Alliance (GSBA) to the training resources of ANEW's pre-apprenticeship program.

Check out their website: www.buildwithprides Seattle.com

BWPS considers themselves a "bridge" for AEC companies,

helping them retain and grow LGBTQIA+ professionals and allies. By celebrating identity-based communities, the industry fosters networking and skills transfer, creating an inclusive environment where individuals feel valued, and teams grow stronger.

Kabri Lehrman-Schmid is a superintendent with Hensel Phelps, with 17 years of experience, currently leading the S Concourse Evolution project at SEA. Courtney Wise is a marketing manager with 12 years of experience in the AEC industry.

Washington State Office of Minority & Women's Business Enterprises (OMWBE)

APPLY FOR PUBLIC WORKS SMALL BUSINESS ENTERPRISE (PWSBE)



The Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises launched a new program for Public Works Small Business Enterprise (PWSBE) Certification. If you are a small business owner seeking work on public works contracts, we encourage you to start your application now. Certification is FREE through June 2025!

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Building a resilient supply chain: Skanska's approach to inclusion and growth

■ *Embedding supplier diversity into the company's culture ensures that it is not just a compliance checkbox but a core value that influences decision-making at every level.*

By **COURTNEY FRAGA**
Skanska

In today's construction industry, the importance of diversity and inclusion extends beyond the workforce to the entire supply chain. Companies are recognizing that a more diverse supply chain doesn't just meet compliance goals — it drives innovation, strengthens communities and creates a more sustainable business model. Skanska has embedded supplier diversity into its broader commitment to diversity and inclusion. Through a well-developed supplier diversity program, the company has made significant strides in supporting underrepresented businesses, including but not limited to minority-owned, women-owned, veteran-owned and small businesses.



Fraga

heart of Skanska's approach is the belief that diversity within the supply chain is actively cultivated and integrated into every aspect of procurement — internal and external. This focus ensures that diverse businesses are not just given the opportunity to participate, but also are provided meaningful opportunities that foster innovation and growth in both the company and the communities they serve.

Below are key lessons from Skanska's approach that businesses can adopt to create or improve their own supplier diversity efforts.

MAXIMIZE OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH INCLUSIVITY

While many construction projects come with external diversity requirements, such as goals set from clients or public agencies, Skanska takes a proactive approach by assessing opportunities to maximize diverse spend on all projects. This tactic pushes project teams to consider diverse suppliers at every stage of the process, from project setup expenses, to construction supplies, to prime and multi-tier trade partner procurement, and ensures that diversity is consistently reflected in the company's



Manager Courtney Fraga addresses the room at a Skanska diverse supplier matchmaking event where suppliers can introduce themselves, showcase their capabilities to key decision-makers and learn about doing business with Skanska.

Photo courtesy of Skanska USA

operations.

Outside of construction expenses, Skanska considers its internal needs for diverse spend opportunities as well — from buying office swag, to catering business meetings, to supporting its

leadership with mental health trainings. Any financial investment made is another opening to buy diverse and local.

INVEST IN LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS

Supplier diversity programs thrive when companies move beyond transactional relationships and invest in the long-term success of diverse trade partners. Skanska exemplifies this by not only inviting diverse firms to bid on projects, but also offering the mentorship, training and networking to support their growth.

For example, Skanska's Construction Management Building Blocks (CMBB) program connects diverse firms with Skanska professionals from various sides of the business — such as safety, preconstruction, and project management — helping them learn how to work with a large contractor like Skanska, while also building relationships and breaking down barriers.

The program has helped over 800 businesses secure more than \$740 million in contracts since its inception in 2007.

The mutually beneficial nature of programs like CMBB should not be overlooked, providing great opportunities for suppliers and contractors alike. Working with entrepreneurial business owners brings fresh innovation and adaptability. Many small, diverse businesses excel at leveraging technology, using cutting-edge AI tools to respond to RFPs, summarize meetings and develop marketing strategies. Their ability to innovate with limited resources in a rapidly changing environment is truly impressive.

USE DATA TO DRIVE DECISION-MAKING

A data-driven approach is critical to the success of a supplier diversity program, as it helps track the internal and external impact, while also driving long-term improvement.

In this past six years, Skanska's Seattle office has invested almost \$420 million in efforts to increase diversity.

To provide a holistic picture of this investment, Skanska prioritizes regular audits of its vendor list, while analyzing the behaviors of its office and suppliers. Skanska evaluates factors including contract values, project performance and supplier engagement. This data-driven approach provides a clear understanding of which suppliers are overutilized and underutilized while also pinpointing gaps in the supply chain.

A key insight gained through this data-driven approach is the importance of balancing supplier workloads. Over-reliance on businesses can lead to overextension, potentially lowering performance on projects. Meanwhile, the data highlights diverse suppliers that may only have been engaged once but have demonstrated strong performance. These findings provide roadmaps to nurturing and expanding relationships with businesses, ensuring all suppliers the opportunity to grow.

This data has been critical to reforming Skanska's supplier diversity program. In the Seattle office, from 2022 through 2023, we increased the number of diverse firms by 25% and boosted diverse spending by 72% since 2018.

ENGAGE WITH THE COMMUNITY

Building a diverse supply chain requires more than identifying diverse suppliers — it involves active engagement with local communities, industry networks and business associations. Through this collaboration, contractors can create a pipeline of businesses equipped with the resources and connections necessary to succeed in larger projects.

Skanska hosts events to connect with diverse suppliers, including industry forums, vendor spotlights, meet-and-greets, open houses and matchmaking events. These events allow suppliers to introduce themselves and showcase their capabilities to key Skanska decision-makers, while also providing diverse firms to make impactful connections between firms.

One matchmaking event brought together small subcontractors with prime trade partners, focusing on mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and demolition sectors — areas where smaller businesses struggle to compete for larger contracts. This successfully led to an immediate contract for a mechanical subcontractor and a minority plumbing supplier at Montlake Elementary school.

Furthermore, many smaller, diverse businesses are dedicated to giving back and advocating for their communities, underscoring yet another key benefit. Marcus Cola, owner of Apex Electrical Group, serves on the board of Q Missions, a nonprofit helping veterans with PTSD through missions to build homes in Mexico. Darci Henderson, owner of Alltrus, serves on the board of Taber 100, a nonprofit supporting Black entrepreneurs with technical assistance, training, and scholarships.

Investing in these businesses means investing in the communities and the causes they support.

BUILD A CULTURE OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

A supplier diversity program cannot succeed in isolation — it must be part of a broader company-wide commitment to diversity and inclusion. Embedding supplier diversity into the company's culture ensures that it is not just a compliance checkbox but a core value that influences decision-making at every level.

Creating a culture of diversity involves educating staff, encouraging diverse perspectives in problem-solving and ensuring that supplier diversity goals are integrated into the overall business strategy. By fostering a culture that values inclusion, contractors can drive more innovative project outcomes, create stronger community relationships, and build a more resilient supply chain.

Supplier diversity is no longer just about compliance; it is a strategy that drives innovation, strengthens communities and builds a more resilient supply chain.

Courtney Fraga is supplier diversity manager for Skanska USA Building, working side by side with operations to implement best practices and procedures to maximize opportunity for diversely owned subcontractors and suppliers on Skanska's construction projects.

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The benefits of Public Works Small Business Enterprise certification

■ *The race and gender neutral certification gives qualified small business owners access to work and opportunities to grow — at no cost.*

By SHARON HARVEY HUGHES
OMWBE

Washington state is certifying small businesses seeking public works contracts. The Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises (OMWBE) recently expanded its state certification program to include Public Works Small Business Enterprises.

PWSBE certification is designed for small businesses operating in the construction industry, or other fields engaged in public works contracting. For many years, OMWBE has offered Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) certification to increase minority- and women-owned business participation on federally funded projects. PWSBE certification provides a similar benefit, for state funded contracting opportunities.



Hughes

PWSBE differs from the rest of OMWBE's state program as a race and gender neutral certification. While most certifications are based upon social and economic disadvantage, PWSBE relies solely on economic disadvantage. PWSBEs must be small businesses, but owners are not required to be a member of a minority group or a woman to be eligible for certification. This ensures every small business goes through the same certification process as minority and women business owners, leveling the playing field by holding everyone to the same standards. Other eligibility criteria still apply, requiring both ownership and control of the business, with specific thresholds for economic disadvantage and business size.

BACKGROUND

The Washington State Legislature created PWSBE certification in Senate Bill (SB) 5268. Legislative funding was provided to OMWBE to establish PWSBE certification, and the Department of Commerce provided funding to the Municipal Research and Services Center to create a new statewide small works roster, which launched on July 1. This laid the foundation for small and diverse business inclusion, but the primary benefit of SB 5268 is in the direct contracting process.

Now, for contracts in the amount of \$150,000 or less, SB 5268 allows state agencies and local governments to direct contract with certified businesses. If there are six or more certified businesses on the statewide small works roster, public entities must directly contract with one of OMWBE's certified businesses.

DIRECT CONTRACT OPPORTUNITY

PWSBE certification can guarantee that OMWBE certified businesses get work. PWSBE certified businesses on MRSC's new statewide small works roster are eligible for direct contracting

opportunities with a state agency or local government. If there are six or more OMWBE certified businesses on the new small works roster, the state agency or local government must select an OMWBE certified business for the small works project.

Equity and inclusion are also built into the selection process, when multiple opportunities are on the table. Agencies and local governments must rotate the use of certified businesses to allow all businesses an opportunity to contract with the government.

BENEFITS ALL SMALL BUSINESSES

PWSBE certification is race and gender neutral, but OMWBE certified minority and women owned businesses in the public works industry are strongly encouraged to add PWSBE certification to their credentials.

The more OMWBE certified businesses listed on MRSC's statewide small works roster, the more small business owners will get job opportunities. Direct contracting opportunities and a chance to be selected for projects up to \$150,000 serve as a benefit for all OMWBE certified small businesses. Small works projects may be larger than the direct contracting threshold as well, up to \$350,000 for competitive bidding. Getting PWSBE certified and joining the small works roster opens the door to opportunity.

NO COST

There is no application fee for PWSBE certification. In fact, there is no cost for any OMWBE certification from now until June 30, 2025. If you are a small business owner in the public works industry, apply for PWSBE certification now. Joining MRSC's new statewide small works roster is also free for every PWSBE certified business. There is no cost to participate in this opportunity to grow your small business.

STREAMLINED APPLICATION PROCESS

Businesses that are already state certified with OMWBE may "opt-in" to become PWSBE certified. This is a streamlined process that eliminates paperwork and time to become certified. For applicants without OMWBE certification, the full application process will take 60 days or less.

PWSBE PROCESSING TEAM

OMWBE has a new PWSBE application processing team, which is focused on processing PWSBE applications. The PWSBE team has one supervisor and two experienced certification analysts. A dedicated PWSBE processing team was created to ensure the success of the new PWSBE certification program. Certification analysts assist all PWSBE applicants free of charge. If you have questions about getting certified, call OMWBE at (360) 664-9750 and an expert will guide you through the process.

SPREAD THE WORD

OMWBE's new PWSBE certification can be a benefit to all small businesses. This certification provides an opportunity for small businesses in the field of public works to avoid the traditional bidding process and directly contract with the government for projects worth up



OMWBE director Lekha Fernandes and team speaking at the first annual Northwest Contractor's Day conference.

Photo courtesy of OMWBE

to \$150,000. The more businesses take advantage of this opportunity by becoming PWSBE certified and participating with MRSC's new statewide roster, the more OMWBE certified businesses can get public works jobs with the government.

OMWBE and MRSC have presented on the new PWSBE certification in both eastern and western Washington to reach a wide range of small businesses in the public works industry. We need help spreading the word to any small business interested in public works contracting opportunities. If you are one of those businesses, start your application today!

Sharon Harvey Hughes is the director of policy at OMWBE and previously served as OMWBE's assistant director of certification.



PWSBE-certified businesses on a new statewide small works roster are eligible for direct contracting opportunities with state agencies and local governments.

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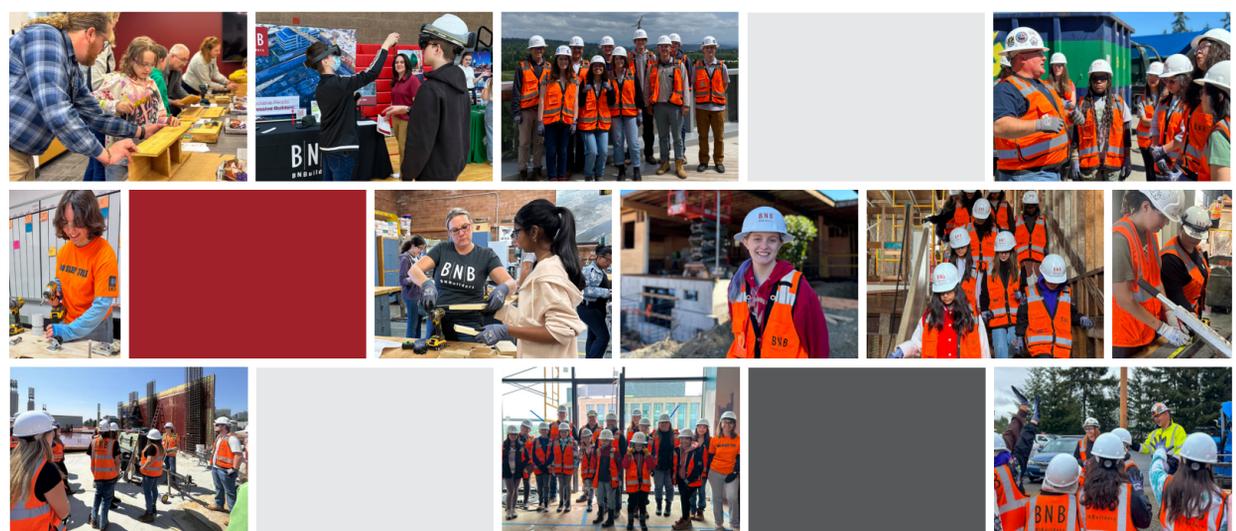
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