



Fine Line Construction:

# San Francisco's Affordable Housing Specialist

Fine Line Construction has built a reputation as a trusted partner and leader in the non-profit housing construction sector

*Written by: Kevin Doyle Produced by: Stephen Marino*







**E**stablished in 1980, Fine Line Construction of San Francisco has grown to become a Bay Area leader in the non-profit sector, specializing in publicly sponsored projects such as affordable housing, transitional housing, senior housing and multi-dwelling hospice communities.

Under the direction of company Founder and CEO Doree Friedman, the company made a conscious decision to transition from residential construction in the early 1990s and has forged a sterling reputation for its

dedication to community outreach and its execution and delivery of superior client-specific solutions for sensitive and often unique projects.

“Whatever the client is paying for, we’re putting our very best into the project. So, even though this may be low-income housing, the application has to be perfect. We want our products to be really nice. It’s as simple as that,” said Paolo Friedman, the company’s President and Chief Estimator.

Depending upon the number of jobs the company has running, it







employs anywhere from 50 to 200 professionals and field staff while generating annual revenue in the \$150 million range. Its capabilities include Design/Build, Public Works, rehabilitations and phased construction. It is a full service contractor. Fine Line self-performs approximately 20 percent of the work on any given project and collaborates with a trusted network of subcontractors.

The company has executed projects for clients such as Chinatown Community Development Center, the San

Francisco Department of Public Works, San Francisco Women's Centers, Inc., the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, the Alameda County Community Development Agency, the San Francisco Public Library, City of Berkeley, Port of San Francisco, Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation, Community Housing Partnership, Bridge Housing, and Tenant and Owners Development Corporation, to name a few.

Examples of projects include, Woolf House senior



housing project completed for the non-profit Tenants and Owners Development Corporation (TODCO); the low-income Cambridge Hotel, in conjunction with the Community Housing Partnership (CHP); and 430 Turk low income housing for Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation (TNDC).

Fine Line is currently in various stages of completing five jobs that started in the fall of 2015 and are staggered through April 2017. The company has also

recently started five more projects totaling \$145 million ranging from 11 months to two years duration. The company is regarded as an expert in rehabbing buildings that are fully occupied.

Paolo describes the challenges of Fine Line's work: "If you can get everybody on the same page with the same goals, you're likely going to pick up some efficiency," Friedman notes. "Learning curves fall off in the early phases and the detailed thought process for each worker becomes almost automatic. Our crews start to





run faster and smoother.”

## Operations

Fine Line adheres to a simple credo – the general contractor runs the show.

“Our Supers explain to the subs this is the type of construction we do. We specialize in occupied, phased housing. We want to be fair but firm. We’re the general contractor and work tirelessly to plan our work and then work our plan. If we stick with that protocol, we’ll not only complete

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*President*

*Paolo Friedman*







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San Francisco native Alex Peraza founded ProCountertop USA, LLC in 1996. Growing up, Peraza's parents instilled their values and hard work ethic. In doing so, they laid the foundation for Peraza to start a business of his own.

Realizing his passion for beautifully designed homes, Peraza obtained a contractor's license, perfected his skill set, and began fabricating and installing manufactured stone. He started out with just a small truck and a few tools, but quickly grew his business through referrals from one client after another who recognized his drive, creativity and perfectionism.

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**PROUD TO PARTNER WITH FINE LINE CONSTRUCTION.**

the job successfully but we'll likely have that client for life," Friedman says.

Having grown up in the trades – he was digging trenches and carrying lumber at a young age – Friedman has developed a knack for budgeting and a keen sense of what works. The company doubled its volume within a year when he took over the estimating duties.

"I started as a laborer and always tried to figure out how to work as quickly and efficiently as possible. So I'm always asking 'How can I

make operations the best it can be?' That's my game," he says.

A differentiator for Fine Line is its commitment to value engineering while providing the client with options. For example, if a client requests an expensive feature with poor life expectancy, Fine Line will suggest a less-expensive alternative that lasts longer and maintains the integrity of the original design.

"We tailor our approach to the client's needs so we need to be consistent and use protocols that get the project there with an





undivided attention to quality, done on time and on budget without cutting corners," Friedman asserts.

Maintaining a strong relationship with sub-contractors is vital. Fine Line has a reputation for working with local outfits and is a signatory the carpenters and laborers unions.

"When we're negotiating a job, we ask for references and prequalify potential subcontractors. In competitive bids it's different – you're kind of stuck with the low bid. But, the subs know what to

expect, know we are quick and know how to bid to work with us. Ninety percent of those on our sub list are known factors. Ten percent might be new to us and of that group, 20 percent may not get it due to our high standards," Friedman explains.

Friedman says the company works hard to groom and maintain an accomplished staff. To that end, employees – many of whom have been with the company a minimum of 10 years – are provided both union apprenticeship classrooms and on-the-job training.





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#### Safety and Technology

The company's Safety Officer, Mandy Becquet, conducts surprise site visits and the site Superintendents holds weekly tailgate meetings to discuss project-specific topics.

"She talks about how to be safe based on the job. If we have a frayed cord, or something substandard, workers know it can be replaced and keep an eye on ensuring a safe work place. We are lucky because we do so many different projects in so many different environments and have

strong safety protocols in place for all types of scenarios," Friedman says.

The company is now utilizing new project software that combines accounting and Project Management, which Friedman says has been a bit challenging because "there's a new learning curve and people have to learn the Project Manager functions of the new software."

"Some of our best Supers are the ones that are old school. They came from a world where you







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*President*

*Paolo Friedman*

kept your job because you were productive. The best guys are the builders with knowledge of systems, not the guys who are just super savvy about technology. What we need is a balance of both," Friedman observes.

## What's Next?

The company is in a comfort zone, so a concerted growth effort is unlikely. What clients can expect is that the company will continue forward in its mission to address affordable housing needs with projects of the highest quality.



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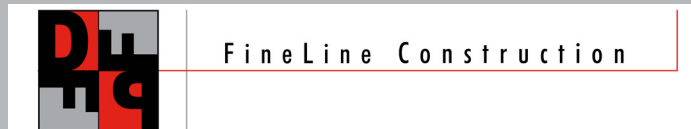
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## COMPANY INFORMATION



**Company Name:** Fine Line Construction

**Country:** U.S.

**Industry:** Construction

**Est:** 1980

**Revenue:** USD \$150m

**Premiere Service:** Affordable housing, transitional housing, senior housing, multi-dwelling hospice communities.

**Founder/CEO:** Doree Friedman

**President:** Paolo Friedman

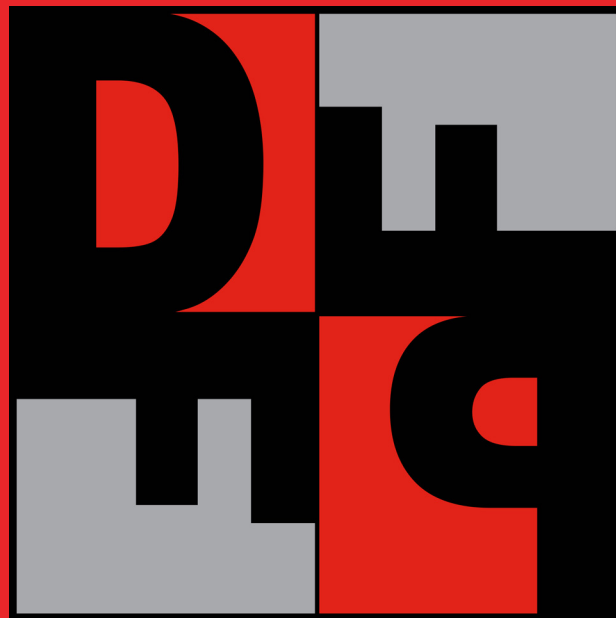
**Vice President:** Emily Lin

**Website:** [www.finelineconstruction.com](http://www.finelineconstruction.com)



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