

KELLY'S PROPERTY SERVICES LLC

Chelmsford Village Condominium: Revitalizing a Community

by Peter Golden

What kind of skill, knowledge and organization does it take to help a condominium community overcome the challenges that result from three-plus decades of limited maintenance and capital improvements?

Bryan Kelly and Fin Korhonen, who along with colleagues Ben Wright and Steve Huss manage Waltham-based Kelly's Property Services, ask themselves that question every day.

As they supervise Kelly's 70-plus carpenters, siding specialists and painters working on condominium assignments throughout Massachusetts and Eastern New England, they know their reputation and competitive edge rest on a single question: How can we do better, today?

Large-scale Revitalization

"Craft skill is always central to the pursuit of high quality," says Kelly, "but scheduling, planning, budgeting and open communications also come into

play, especially when we're working on large-scale revitalization projects for associations like Chelmsford Village Condominium."

Chelmsford Village, located near the junction of Routes 3 and 495, combines tree-shaded, multi-level town homes with four-story high-rises. Kelly and Korhonen first reviewed the 260-unit complex in early 2007. It had not benefited from significant repair or capital-improvement programs in decades.

Scores of staircases and decks, thousands of yards of siding and trim, and substantial expanses of roofing were in urgent need of attention.

Walking the beautifully designed site, one can readily understand why association members minimized maintenance and improvement outlays. Graceful landscaping conveys the sense of a rural village throughout much of the association, and vinyl siding in garden units and other sections of the site offered long-term protection against the elements.

Multitude of Problems

Muted exterior colors and tree-shaded homes kept a multitude of problems out of sight and mind. But New England weather and passing years degraded even the best materials and construction.

"From rotted sills to leaking roofs, warped window frames and fallen decks—and everywhere in between—we realized there was much to be done," says Kelly.

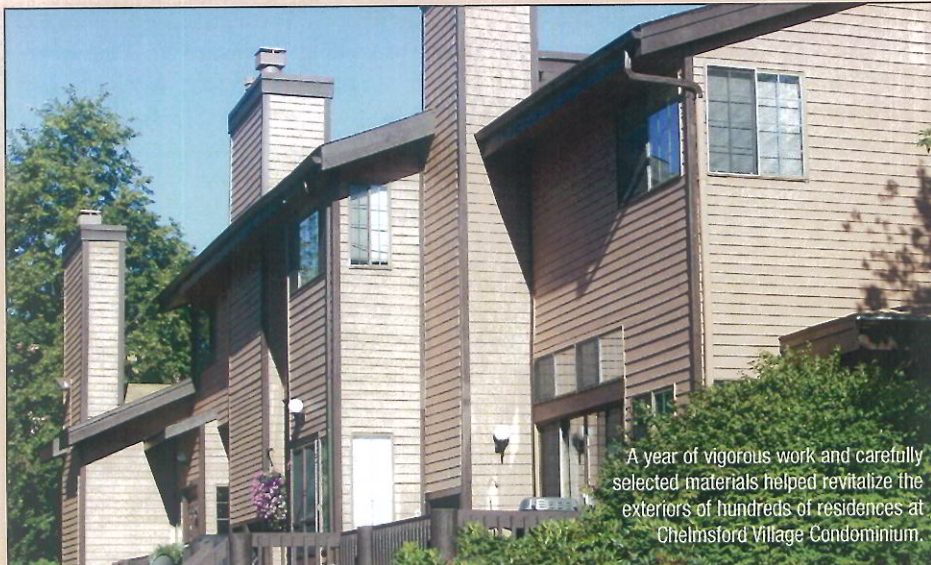
Korhonen nods in agreement. "In the 12 months we spent at Chelmsford Village, we replaced upwards of 150 squares of siding and many thousands of lineal feet of trim. We also installed 16 skylights and re-hung windows while we rebuilt nine chimney chases. Then we re-stained the exteriors of 100 units."

For siding, Kelly's used clear, vertical grain, pre-primed red cedar from National Lumber of Newton, which also supplied other lumber and sheathing in the course of the work. Tom Lowmister from ICI Paint provided the hundreds of gallons of stain needed for the job.

But there's more to this story: The vinyl-clad exteriors of the association's four high-rise buildings were in good shape, but interior common areas needed refreshing. Kelly's repainted more than 3,200 feet of hallways and stairways, plus doorways serving 128 units. They also fixed water-damaged ceilings and damaged walls.

Integrity

Kelly's prides itself on the integrity of its work. "We believe in keeping a close eye on every assignment we undertake," says Korhonen, "especially when multiple tasks need to be carried out simultaneously.



A year of vigorous work and carefully selected materials helped revitalize the exteriors of hundreds of residences at Chelmsford Village Condominium.

"We walk a site with association leaders and management representatives so we're intimately familiar with every detail of the work and develop a shared vision of the desired outcome," he adds.

Kelly's Property Services' name is well known throughout the community-association world of Eastern Massachusetts. The firm's ability to deliver painting and carpentry services of the highest order, including such challenging assignments as hardwood cabinetry of all sorts, turning staircases and coffered ceilings, has brought it scores of high-end residential interior assignments.

In recent years, Kelly's has turned to larger assignments, like Chelmsford Village. "You have to balance craft excellence against the organizational complexities of large-scale jobs—the kind that can engage dozens of our people and require hundreds of thousands of dollars in supplies," says Kelly.

Careful Planning

"Jobs like Chelmsford Village must be sequenced across a span of time and require careful planning, budgeting and field management. We don't exactly live on the job," Kelly says, "but we always like to have more than one set of eyes on a piece of work."

That kind of integrity and the enthusiastic endorsements of past clients ("They're our best calling card," says Korhonen) brought Kelly's Property Services to the attention of Chris Demogenes, president of the board of Chelmsford Village Condominium Association.

Demogenes, a retired aerospace engineer and real estate entrepreneur with a specialty in condominium development, has lived in Chelmsford Village since the early 1980s. But here's a twist: Demogenes was the original developer of the Chelmsford Village community.

"I grew up in Lowell, right next door," says Demogenes, "and I have a

lot of pride. I saw what was going on with other condominium developers, and when I finished the last phase of construction at Chelmsford Village, I decided I would be the one to answer any concerns of new unit owners. I moved into one of my own units!"

While Demogenes lived and raised his family at Chelmsford Village, he kept a



Kelly's Property Services managers Fin Korhonen (left) and Bryan Kelly bring a commitment to outstanding craftsmanship to their work on behalf of community associations.

low profile, even accepting the long-term policy of the association (in which he was not active) to minimize maintenance and capital improvement expense in the name of low association fees.

Then the association, more than two decades after the construction of the property, turned to Demogenes to shepherd unit owners through the challenging tasks of renewal. Suddenly he was president of an association from which he had absented himself as developer years before.

Revitalization

Based on the recommendation of Chelmsford Village's new management company, American Properties Team, Demogenes chose Kelly's Property Services to plan, budget and execute what essentially was a total condominium makeover—a revitalization, if you will.

"Kelly's does a great job, the biggest bang for your buck," says American Properties Team site manager Tom Buja, whose company ensured that

Chelmsford Village's faded glory was replaced by mature elegance.

"I'm a licensed contractor myself, and after I assessed the property I had a pretty good picture of the work that needed to be done," he says.

"Jessica Cantalupo, one of our property managers, had worked with Kelly's in the past," continues Buja, "and once the bidding process was over I got nothing but positive comment from their references. I had no problem bringing them to our board."

In talking about Chelmsford Village and how he, the association and American Properties Team partnered with Kelly's Property Services, Demogenes can be refreshingly direct: "I walk Gigi (his French poodle) every day, and people were coming to me, [saying], 'Why can't we fix this? Why can't we do that?'"

"I'm a take charge guy; I still build condos; I've done six or seven hundred in my time. It's never been in my nature to play second fiddle. So after all those years, someone asked and I said, 'It's time to get to work.'"

Working with Purpose

"I have to be honest with you: Much of the work Kelly's undertook was arranged by my predecessor," says Demogenes. "But I'm a pretty demanding guy. Kelly's worked with purpose, met schedules and did quality work. I've seen a lot of vendors that don't measure up. But not Kelly's. They do a great job!"

There is a possibility that Chelmsford Village Condominium may not be the only community association in New England that has found itself in need of revitalization. How about yours?

For more information about Kelly's Property Services LLC and painting and carpentry services of all kinds, call 508-393-3429 or visit them on the Web at www.kellyspropertyservices.com.