



# METROWEST BUSINESS MONDAY

## Vision Builders sets sights on renovation.

by Bob Tremblay—Daily News Staff

Bob's Southern Bistro had a problem. Vision Builders Co. would provide the solution.

"The owner wanted to redo the whole bar area and add a TV," said Anthony Gagliardi, founder and chief operating officer of Vision Builders. "He felt he was losing business because if there was a big game on a Saturday night, no one would show up because he didn't have the TV. So he wanted a plasma TV."

Gagliardi's Framingham company was hired to renovate the Boston restaurant. The catch was the eatery could only remain closed for two weeks. Rumor has it that a closed restaurant doesn't earn much money.

To meet the two-week deadline, Vision Builders dedicated four months of planning. "All that planning ensured that the job ran flawlessly, was on time and actually came in under budget," said Gagliardi. "It was challenging, but we got it done in two weeks and the owner was very pleased."

Since opening in April 2005, the general construction management firm has worked on more than 30 renovation projects, primarily with restaurants and retail stores.

"Most of the work is interior," said Gagliardi. "The building is already built, we go inside and renovate it."

The assignment can involve taking an old business and turning into a new one or taking an existing business and giving it a new look. For example, in one of Gagliardi's early projects, a former Applebee's was transformed into a Firefly's Bodacious Bar-B-Que & Beyond in Framingham.

"We came in and renovated the entire space... with a totally new look and



### Profile

**Owner:**  
Anthony Gagliardi

**Number of Employees:**  
1

**Industry:**  
General Contracting

**Background:**  
Based in Framingham, Vision Builders Co. is a general construction management firm specializing in renovations for new and existing companies. Its Web address is [www.visionbuildersco.com](http://www.visionbuildersco.com)

**Anthony Gagliardi, left, is founder of Vision Builders Co. in Framingham. Above, from left to right, are examples of the company's renovation projects for Bob's Southern Bistro and Work 'N Gear stores.**

theme, plus a few unforeseen obstacles," said Gagliardi. "For starters, due to the tight space restrictions and the owner's desire for a specifically designed buffet/condiment bar, we had to custom-build all of the casework on-site." There simply wasn't enough time to measure, then come back and put it all together in the field.

"We also worked closely with several of the owner's vendors to make sure our work would flow smoothly since there were numerous graphical elements supplied by an owner's source that had to be installed by us." But making sure that the vendor had his products completed when we needed to install them required constant coordination on our part.

"One particularly interesting scenario came with the local fire department, which has a reputation for running things strictly by the book." When the permit was originally filed, there was no work slated to be done to the fire alarms or sprinklers. But as the project unfolded, we realized that we had to install a smoker in the kitchen for the ribs and chicken, etc. The spot where the wanted the smoker to be sited was right beneath a sprinkler head which was also in the way of the exhaust, so we relocated the sprinkler head.

"Then when the fire inspector arrived, He noticed that a fire alarm strobe had also been moved by a television installer". The fire inspector was not amused and didn't

want to sign off on the permit; so I had to step in and assure him that everything would be done to code, which it was. Tight space. Limited time. Multiple players. The key was having the flexibility to make last-minute changes on the spot and work around unexpected obstacles."

Firefly's owner Steve Uliss was impressed. "Anthony Gagliardi is a consummate pro — nothing phases him," said Uliss. "When I presented him with a long list of structural and interior design requirements against a very tight opening date he didn't flinch — he made it happen. Since then, I've received so many positive comments from our customers, I can't keep count. And I was so impressed by the experience that I know who to call for all my new restaurant locations — no question about that."

Gagliardi says he started Vision Builders so he could form just those kind of relationships. He had previously worked in his father Antonio's construction company, AMG Construction in Framingham. Antonio taught his son the trade during his summer breaks from school and after he graduated from college Anthony joined the firm and ran the company for a decade, beginning in 1995. The Firefly's job actually took place while Newton native was running AMG. But the son wanted his own company and he also was wanted a different niche.

"They were doing mostly public construction and I really didn't like that because it was very cut-throat and there were no relationships involved," said Gagliardi. "If you were the low bidder, you go the job and that was it. I started to get more involved in private work where there was more of a relationship involved. If you do a good job, people want to work with you again. It motivated me to get out on my own and focus on the private sector."

To help name the new company, Gagliardi worked with a friend in the copyright field. "He gave me probably 30 ideas and I picked Vision Builders," he said. The reason? "In construction you need to have vision and it made a good fit with the company."

In the latter part of 2005, the company eyed, so to speak, an ambitious project for work-wear apparel firm Work 'N Gear. For the Weymouth-based firm, Vision Builders renovated 17 locations in six states in a 2 1/2 month period. Once again, Vision Builders faced some testy deadlines. The company didn't get the plans for two of the stores until early September, and permits couldn't be applied for until then. Since a grand opening had already been announced, that left 10 days to complete both jobs, front to back, side to side, and floor to ceiling.

"They had already run ads in the newspaper," Gagliardi recalled. "They didn't realize the permit process took so long. By the time the ads were run, they said, 'You gotta do what you gotta do to get it done.' We got it done." Both locations were completed with a day to spare, and occupancy permits were issued the same day.

Scott Filleul, director of store construction for Work 'N Gear, was also impressed. We threw some deadlines at them that most

other contractors would have balked at," he said. "But they have this type of work down to such a science that they were somehow able to assemble all the right materials, a first-rate crew, and put in the time and skill to get it done for us."

Gagliardi says with proper planning and execution almost any hurdle can be overcome. The company employs several sets of subcontractors, many of whom work in rotation on back-to-back shifts in order to meet client deadlines.

"Renovations can be a little more challenging than construction projects because sometimes you uncover something you didn't know was there," said Gagliardi. "Luckily, that hasn't happened with us yet." The deadlines can also be tighter, especially with retail stores and restaurants. "They have to be open fast so you really don't have a lot of time," said Gagliardi. "You sometimes have to work around the clock."

Restaurants can be particularly trying. "With them you're dealing with the Board of Health and kitchen equipment," said the Natick resident. "there's more that can go wrong."

Vision Builders hasn't had much gone wrong. The company expects to double its workload this year. It just signed a deal with Mattress Discounters to work on seven stores in Virginia while Work 'N Gear wants to do 20 more projects. The firm is clearly in demand in a crowded field. "Many companies do this. Construction is very competitive," said Gagliardi. "The barriers to entry are pretty small in this business. Anyone with a pickup truck can get into it. It's a matter of having a track record and being able to do what you can say and I've satisfied all my customers. I say I can get it done and I get it done. The quality's there, the

budget's there and I meet the deadlines." The cost of a project varies depending on the project. Some are more labor intensive than others. The price can range from \$10 a square foot to \$200 a square foot.

"One of the stores in Beverly for Work 'N Gear used to be a Shaw's supermarket," said Gagliardi. "It had no storefront. They broke it up and gave us the left corner of the building. It was a brick wall so we had to rip out the wall and put in a whole new storefront. That cost about \$80 a square foot."

The company has succeeded by developing close working relationships with its clients, according to Gagliardi. This success is built upon, appropriately enough, a shared vision as well as open dialogue and skilled craftsmanship, he added. For Work 'N Gear, Vision Builders evaluated every potential site and figured out what it would take to build out the space to its specifications before it signed the lease, according to Gagliardi. This way, Work 'N Gear could negotiate the lease with specific knowledge and from a position of fiscal strength, he said.

Then, once Vision Builders received drawings from the architect, it started construction right away and completed the jobs within weeks and under budget, he added.

"The best part about this business is knowing that when you do a good job, people appreciate it and make those referrals on your behalf," said Gagliardi. "I think of myself not just as a builder, but as a thinker. Our company always takes the initiative to come up with ideas to save clients money and get the job done fast, without cutting corners. I'd like that to be my legacy."

#### About Vision Builders Co.:

*Vision Builders is a nationally-Recognized new breed of general contracting and construction management firm with a business model that places equal emphasis on the quality of the client experience as the quality of the finished product. It focuses on developing close working relationships built upon shared vision, open dialog, and skilled craftsmanship. The private firm, established in 2005, works with new and existing companies in a variety of industries that require renovations and construction build-outs. Vision Builders has completed projects for several restaurants, well-known retail operation Work 'n Gear, with locations in Maine, Massachusetts, New York, Connecticut, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and national Chain Mattress Discounters, with locations in Virginia and Massachusetts.*

# VISION BUILDERS

*If you can envision it,  
we can build it.*



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