

PACIFIC

LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT





SUSTAINABLE

LANDSCAPE SOLUTIONS



PACIFIC LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

Landscape maintenance contractor Pacific Landscape Management (PLM) focuses solely on the commercial sector. President and Owner Bob Grover has worked in the landscape industry for thirty-five years. He started with a company that became acquired by a publicly-traded national company, and this transition quickly changed the culture and day-to-day operations of the organization...

Written by Jen Hocken

Grover missed the close interaction with customers and involvement with the landscape management and eventually left the company. In 2001, he and his business partner, Elias Godinez, founded Pacific Landscape Management from scratch with the mission of becoming the leading landscape management company in the Portland, Oregon area.

PLM has had strong, successful growth since the beginning, and it now has a staff of approximately 260 people and three branch offices surrounding the Portland metropolitan area. Throughout its eighteen-year history, it has had some level of growth every year, including during the economic slowdown between 2008 and 2012. In the last four years, the company has doubled in size. ►►



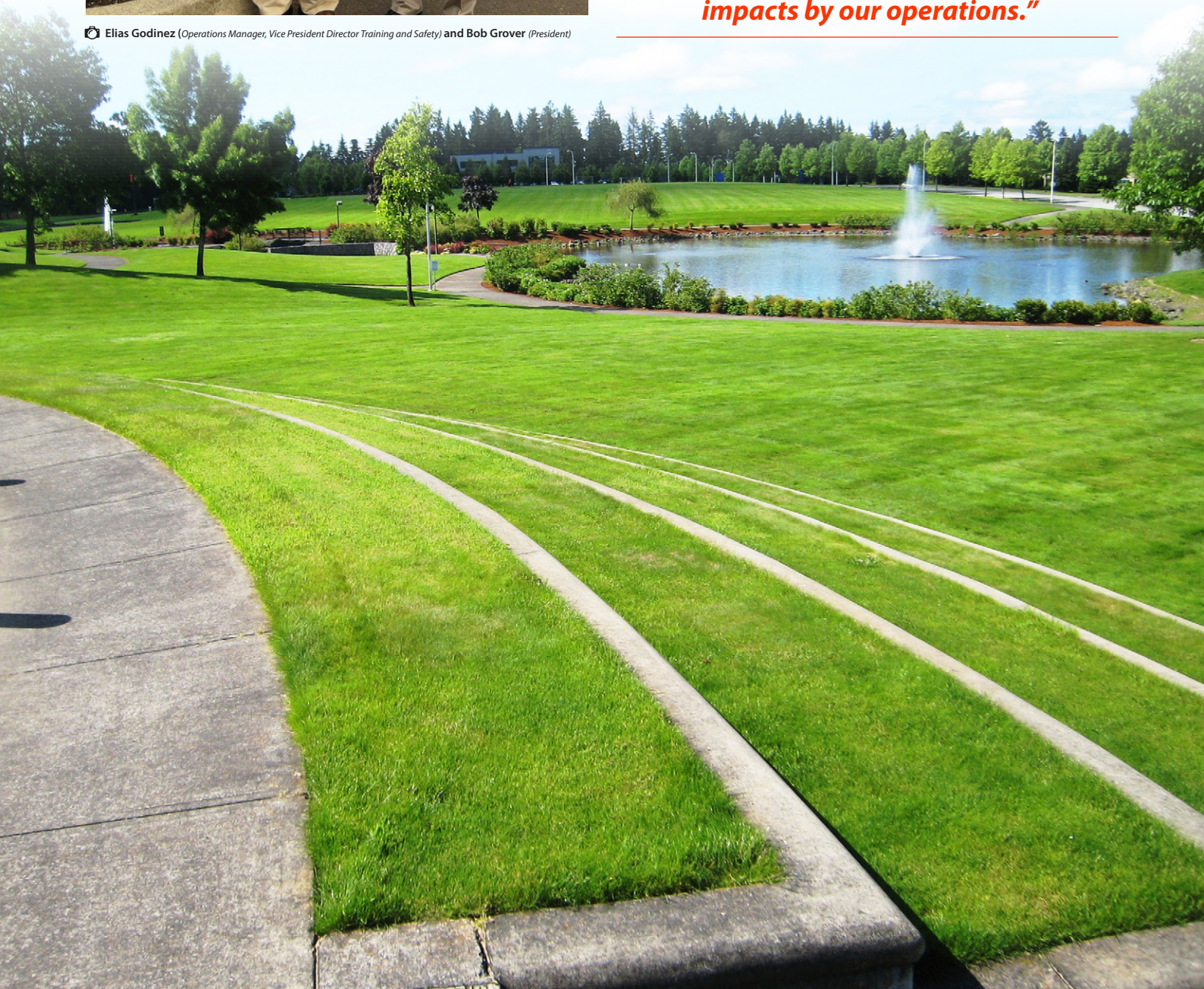


📷 Elias Godinez (Operations Manager, Vice President Director Training and Safety) and Bob Grover (President)

► The company has worked to develop close, meaningful relationships with its employees and customers. “We are a landscape company that maintains plants and operates equipment, but at the end of the day, our relationship with our employees and our relationship with our customers is our strength, and those two things are very important. It’s a relationship with the people we serve and the people who help us serve those people,” says Grover.

PLM also provides its employees with training and numerous opportunities for growth. Elias is passionate about training and employee development and many of the team have taken advantage of the encouragement and have been promoted after putting effort into training and developing their skills. This level of support is part of what makes this such a great place to work.

“We’re trying to create the positive value that landscape brings to the urban world with less negative impacts by our operations.”



The company is very pleased to have been named one of the one hundred best companies for which to work in Oregon by **Oregon Business** magazine for the last three years in a row. PLM is also proud that, for the last eight years, it has been listed as one of the magazine's hundred best green workplaces in Oregon, and the company has been recognized a number of times for its sustainability efforts.

"Through our national trade association, we received a sustainable environmental award, and **Lawn & Landscape Business** magazine, one of our trade magazines, has also given us a sustainability award for our work locally here," says Grover. PLM is very active with the National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP), and it regularly works to help educate fellow landscapers of the trade association about increasing sustainability efforts in organizations across the country. Grover often speaks at the trade association conferences about the company's sustainability programs as well as customer management strategies. The NALP is a great source of education and opportunity to network with other landscaping contractors. PLM also actively participates with its customers' trade associations.

The sustainability movement in landscape design began about two decades ago. PLM specializes in sustainable landscape design and management, which is something that commercial and industrial businesses are very interested in since most try to be as environmentally conscious as possible. "When the sustainable movement started growing, we quickly re-evaluated our services and our operations to make ourselves less impactful to the environment," says Grover.

PLM has made significant progress towards reducing its use of chemical products with lower fertilization levels, reducing its use of dangerous pesticides and herbicides, reducing its fuel use, transitioning to propane-fueled equipment, and adopting battery-operated equipment. "We've done everything we possibly can to lower the impact of our operations while making sure that we're keeping the beneficial aspects of the green commercial landscape around our urban environments."

It encourages and assists its customers through the process of becoming more sustainable. The company can re-engineer the property to assist in making the landscape maintenance operation to become more efficient. "Landscape exists around properties to bring a native environment back into the concrete jungle. A lot of what we do is maybe not so great with the use of petroleum products, water, and synthetic chemicals, so we're trying to create the positive value that landscape brings to the urban world with less negative impacts by our operations," says Grover. ▶▶

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▶ As a commercial maintenance contractor, PLM does not serve any single-family, residential properties; it manages Class A commercial and industrial properties as well as home owners associations and condominiums. It maintains the lion's share of the Class A business parks and corporate campuses in the Portland metro area. "We take care of many of Oregon's locally based international businesses," says Grover. "We also specialize in large-scale homeowners' associations, so those are large residential developments, but we don't take care of the private homes; we just do the large-scale common areas."



The labor shortage is likely the greatest challenge that any business in the United States has today since the unemployment rate is so low. An additional challenge for PLM is that approximately twenty-five percent of its workforce is seasonal. When the landscape is not growing in the middle of the winter, there is less need for landscape maintenance, and it is not the best time of year to do construction-related projects. The seasonal position runs nine months out of the year, which is not particularly desirable and has caused difficulty with attracting and retaining a consistent seasonal workforce. PLM has participated in the H-2B Visa labor program; however, this has unfortunately become more limited and less reliable. The company works closely with its trade association to help stabilize the program through congressional action, and it hopes to expand the pool of legal, seasonal labor.

Most of its customers own the property and are looking to manage it as an asset while hopefully increasing its value. The



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landscape surrounding the building is a piece of that asset. "We consider ourselves a landscape asset manager, and the definition of that to us is helping people protect and enhance that asset so it creates and retains its value," says Grover.

Similarly to any asset on commercial property, the landscape should be properly maintained and updated to attract a customer's attention. PLM has significant experience helping people spend limited resources wisely to keep the property as attractive and sustainable as possible.

The company works closely with its customers and keeps them informed about the status of the property including potential upgrade opportunities. "We are very good at proactive communication. We make sure that we understand the specific expectations and needs of the customer and the property. We're not just out there cutting their grass; we're helping them manage and keep their landscape asset advantage without them having to spend a lot of time or effort," says Grover. "We find the problem, tell them what it is and ideally what the solution is before the problem got critical. Our ultimate goal is to never have a customer tell us a problem because we are ahead of them."

In a Class A commercial building, such improvements as periodic roof repair or lobby renovations keep the property intact and fresh looking, and the same is true with the landscape. "As the landscape ages, it has to be updated, and sometimes there are things that need to change because there are new design elements or new sustainability elements."

Pacific Landscape Management is excited about the changing landscape industry, particularly in the area of sustainability. Of its team of expert landscape professionals, eleven of whom have degrees in horticulture. "A landscaper today has to be much smarter than he did maybe twenty years ago, and we really enjoy being a part of this sophisticated landscape management movement." ■



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7997 NE Walker Road, Hillsboro, OR 97124 | **P:** (503) 648-3900 | **F:** (503) 642-2369 | **E:** info@pacscape.com

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