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**WOMEN IN BUSINESS**  
Maryland

## M. Luis Construction Co., Inc.

*Road-Building Sisters Are Paving a Bright Future*

**They're branching out, breaking new ground – and adding jobs to the local economy.**

With their recent acquisition of an asphalt manufacturing plant in Rockville, sisters and business partners Cidalia Luis-Akbar and Natalia Luis are applying their high quality standards and superior customer service to a whole new area of endeavor. The pair are co-owners of road construction company M. Luis Construction Co., Inc. Cidalia is the company's president and Natalia, its vice president.

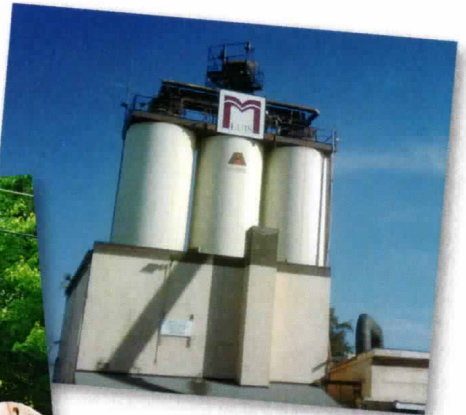
As of mid-April, the newly expanded business had already hired 115 new employees in 2011, says Cidalia. Its asphalt can be found on highways, arterial roads, neighborhoods and parking lots throughout the State of Maryland.

### Living the American Dream

Founded in 1985 by Cidalia and Natalia's parents, M. Luis Construction is the leading woman- and minority-owned construction company in the Delmarva region – and possibly the only woman- and minority-owned asphalt manufacturer on the East Coast, if not the U.S.

The company's original focus was on concrete paving, but it has steadily expanded its offerings over the years to include a turn-key construction operation. Today, the federal government, the State of Maryland, counties, municipalities, and commercial and residential developers turn to it for all of their road construction service needs, including snow removal.

Over the years, M. Luis Construction has paved thousands of miles of roads and highways. It has completed a variety of streetscape projects involving everything from asphalt and concrete paving to storm-water management to traffic signalization. Working closely with homeowners and neighborhood associations, Cidalia says, the company works hard to minimize disruption, keep neighbors informed



and “ensure the project ultimately benefits the entire community.”

Indeed, the company's reconstruction of Bethesda's Battery Park neighborhood helped Montgomery County win its first-ever streetscape award. “The neighborhood had beautiful old

trees, and we actually reconfigured some of our milling machines to make sure the exhaust from our milling and grinding operations wouldn't burn the leaves and branches,” Natalia recalls.

But the project that has meant the most to Cidalia and Natalia was a relatively simple one: the restoration of the road on which the sisters grew up.

“Our family moved here from Portugal in 1979, and our parents bought a small house on Glenallen Avenue in Silver Spring,” Natalia says. “Cidalia and I built so many dreams while we were living in that house – dreams that are coming true.”

“We come from extraordinarily humble beginnings,” says Cidalia. “But my parents worked extremely hard and never gave up – my mother, Albertina, is quite an entrepreneur, and my father, Manuel, is a phenomenal artisan.”

Cidalia and Natalia took over the company in 2008 and have continued their parents' tradition of hard work, values and perseverance. One firmly held belief: Corporate profitability and social responsibility are not mutually exclusive.

Looking back on the company's early days, the sisters emphasize that America has been good to the Luis family. The State of Maryland, too, with its various programs that help women- and minority-owned businesses and ensure that “everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed.”



326 Saint Paul Place, Suite 200 | Baltimore, MD 21202  
410.545.0641 | [www.mluisconstruction.com](http://www.mluisconstruction.com)