



STRUCTURAL VALUE

CHAD HODGES LEADS MCKINLEY BUILDING TO GREATER HEIGHTS

BY ERIC WILLIAMSON | PHOTO BY DARIA AMATO

Construction involves trust based on a series of steps. At times, what can rise from the nothingness of an empty lot is not just a reliable building, but a landmark. In the Wilmington area, McKinley Building Corp. has earned its place in the skyline.

"If you ride up and down U.S. 421 on either side of the road, a lot of those buildings, almost every one that you see, McKinley Building has been a part of over the years," said the company's president, Chad Hodges.

The firm has built hundreds of buildings in the Wilmington area. Recent work include the 20,000-square-foot Coastal Horizons administrative building, a new Subaru dealership for Parkway Automotive and buildings at the Wilmington Trade Center industrial park.

Hodges said that behind each project is a set of philosophies for moving forward. They're as foundational to him and the company as the concrete foundations they pour, he said.

"Everybody has a role, and everybody has a process," Hodges said. "One of the things we talk about here is having clear expectations. It

is really important on all levels. When you meet with a client for the first time, you've got to have clear expectations about what they want. That trickles down to our superintendent that we put on the jobsite. People can perform as long as they know what is expected."

Hodges borders on over-communicating, he said, if it means verifying everyone is on the same page. He also listens.

"The guys that are building the jobs, they will have some of the best ideas when it comes to efficiencies and how something should be laid out," he said.

McKinley is an organization that emphasizes relationships, starting with faith and family, Hodges said. "It's really important for our guys to be home at night," he said. "So, we're not a contractor that's stretched across the state and living out of hotels. This is our home area."

Hodges promotes McKinley's core values – the F.I.R.S.T, with the first letter "F" standing for "faith and family." Hodges said his mentor, McKinley founder Ken Dull, reinforced those values with clients with what he calls "The Grocery Store Test."

"If you were a client of ours that we built a project for, even if it were years later, and we saw each other in the grocery store, are you going to duck and head the other way? No, we would run up to each other like old friends,

PROFILE

excited to catch up with one another and find out how things have been,” Hodges said. “Without a shadow of a doubt, in our community, I know that is what McKinley Building Corp. is known for.”

Hodges became president of McKinley Building in October 2024, but that, too, was a process. Dull tapped Hodges to be his successor, though he wanted Hodges to serve first as chief operating officer so he could gain a more holistic view of operations.

Hodges held that position for about 18 months before transitioning into the presidency. Dull, meanwhile, has stayed on as chairman of the company he founded 34 years ago.

Hodges was a project manager at McKinley for 16 years. He and the construction industry persevered through multiple uncertainties, including the Great Recession and the COVID-19 pandemic.

“One of the things I like to say is you can’t be head coach from the press box,” Hodges said.

His cost estimating, scheduling and client operations contributed to McKinley’s sustained growth. They’ve developed corporate headquarters, big-box retail and health care spaces, car dealerships and multifamily housing, among many other types of projects.

Hodges joined McKinley from John S. Clark Construction Co. His first employer after graduating with a construction management degree from East Carolina University in 1998 was Miller Building Corp.

“I’m not necessarily sure that the Chad back then would have said, ‘Oh yeah, one day I’ll be a president of a commercial general contractor,’” he acknowledged.

But these days, he feels equally comfortable working directly with banks and insurance companies, for

example, as he does a jobsite.

Hodges’ first job was working as a greenskeeper for a golf course as a teenager. Being the youngest member of the team, he had to drive the most decrepit tractor-mower.

“By the end, I could take that tractor anywhere on the golf course that any of the power steering, four-wheel drive tractors could – I just had to go about it a different way,” he said. “I would like to say I knew that course like the back of my hand.”

But, he said, even though his industry involves trade skills, it’s important to keep a growth mindset.

“Construction, you will never learn like the back of your hand,” Hodges said. “Some of the methods of how a building goes up, yes, those things will never change. But the tools that you have, the people that you interact with, everything is a continuing education.”

The Genuine. The Original.

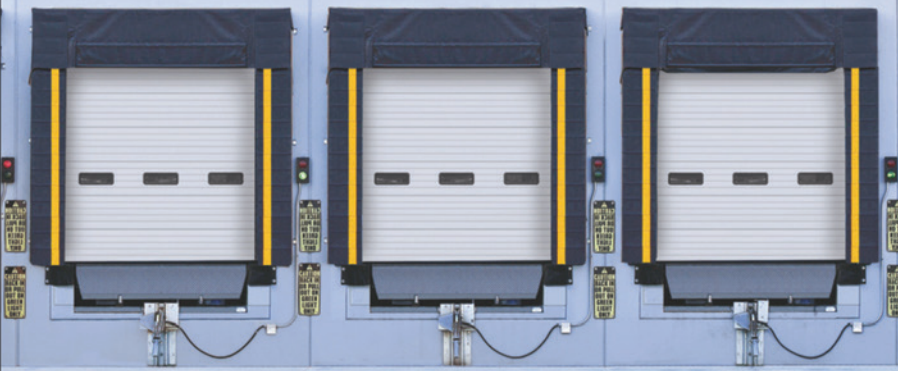


**Overhead Door Company
of Wilmington™**

910-983-8325

Keeping your doors open since 1986.

Locally owned. Family operated.
Providing Loading Docks and Garage Doors
to Wilmington for over 40 years.



T&S JEWELL
Garage Door Group