

COMMERCIAL BUILDING

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BEATTY Construction Company

Quiet Confidence

John Clemmer Photography

Success Center at Gordon College, Barnesville, GA

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Beatty Construction Company



The Howey Physics Observatory at Georgia Tech was a design-build project completed in 2006. Built on top of challenges, including a fully retractable e roof. "It was an interesting task," explains Doug Beatty, "as we had to

Not big on bragging, this Austell-based general contractor prefers to let its work speak for itself.

By Karon Warren

Doug Beatty prefers to avoid the spotlight. In fact, he's the first to tell you he's an introverted person and is not one for splashy marketing campaigns. But when he talks about his company and the work it performs, his passion comes shining through. That's because Beatty Construction Company in Austell prides itself on building quality projects on time and on budget – no small feat in the ever-changing world of Atlanta's commercial construction industry.

Many of those projects can be seen throughout the state, as a large majority of the company's work is performed for the state Board of Regents as well as local government clients. Beatty Construction has built at the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, Gordon College in Barnesville, Kennesaw State University in Kennesaw and multiple locations of Georgia Perimeter College. Government projects include the transformation of a Wal-Mart building into the Gwinnett County Elections and Voter Registration office as well as an interior renovation of the Gwinnett County Courthouse, specifically on office space for the probate court and solicitor's office.

Jeff Hairston, project manager for Gwinnett County's capital projects division, worked with Beatty Construction on the job at the courthouse, and was quite pleased with Beatty's approach to getting the work done without impacting courthouse operations, which continued throughout construction. "It had to be done in phases with the offices open," Hairston says. "They did a very good job phasing that project. They understand the government requirements of a government job. Not everyone knows that."

While a lot of these projects are traditional in nature – parking decks, student centers, office and/or classroom renovations, Beatty Construction strives to find those unique, one-of-a-kind jobs that require its team to really think outside of the box for a workable, affordable solution. One such venture occurred in 2001 in the northbound tunnel between the MARTA Sandy Springs and Dunwoody stations. It sounded simple on the surface: install a Subway advertisement on the tunnel walls. The ad consisted of four-foot stationary boxes of static pictures. "As you drive by, it's like a kaleidoscope and becomes a movie," Beatty explains. "It's still, framed pictures, but your motion inside the train makes it appear to be a movie, and each image is slightly different. It was the first one done in the world. We did it for a media company out of New York City."

The challenge of installing the advertisement? First, due to MARTA's rail schedule, Beatty Construction's work hours were limited to between 2 and 4 a.m. Second, the company had to work with the state fire marshal because it had never been done before. "It added fuel, if you will, because if it ever caught fire and somebody was caught in the subway tunnel, it was fuel that would burn," Beatty says. "So they were skeptical."



John Clemmer Photography

an existing 7-story building, the project had several unique totally think outside the box to make it work!"



Inside the Gordon College Success Center, looking out towards the campus. The curtainwall windows needed an extra brace to withstand the potential wind load against it, another example of the “hand-in-glove” philosophy that Beatty Construction embraces. “We work directly with the architects and engineers to make sure that the customer gets what they want. We’ll find a way to make it work,” says Beatty.

Third, the project was subjected to strict, rigorous inspections from government agencies. As a result, “seconds become minutes of work time,” because the work time zone was so small, Beatty recalls. With six men devoted to the project, the advertisement was installed within six months.

In 2005, another MARTA endeavor – this time at the Five Points Station – also presented some unique challenges. The job encompassed hardsurface paving on the 60,000-square-foot pedestrian area where the east/west and north/south lines come together. As with the previously mentioned project, Beatty Construction’s work window was limited to 2 to 4 a.m. Also, the company had to employ a rail vehicle to transport equipment in and out of the work site. “Basically, that’s your work platform,” Beatty explains. “You take whatever you need on there.” In addition, Beatty Construction brought in a crane as needed to fly items

in and out of the area. The \$3.5 million project took one year to complete.

Over at Georgia Tech, Beatty Construction faced a challenge of a different kind. In 2006, under a job order contract, the company was enlisted to build a 20-foot-by-20-foot observatory with a fully removable roof on top of the physics building. “We basically had a napkin sketch from Georgia Tech that said, ‘We want this,’” Beatty remembers. The company hired a structural engineer and worked out specifics such as how to make the roof move, how to keep the structure from blowing off the roof and how to deal with vibrations. The \$200,000, design-build project was completed in six months.

Shortly thereafter, Beatty Construction embarked on another significant task on the Georgia Tech campus. At Alexander Memorial Coliseum, the company retrofitted four remote-controlled water cannons into the arena. The one-of-a-kind job was foreign even to the design engineer, who had never done a job like it. But Beatty Construction was unfazed. “Technically, it wasn’t very complex, but technical enough that someone had to understand how the pieces worked,” Beatty says. “And that was something that we could understand and were able to bid it economically to get the work.”

At Gordon College in Barnesville, Beatty Construction tackled several challenges during the process of building a 17,500-square-foot addition to the

college’s existing student center. First, the company had to make sure the construction workings remained separate from the college operations that continued daily throughout the project. Second, John Conley, AIA, the project architect for The Facility Group in Smyrna who worked with Beatty on the project, said the building’s design called for a unique aesthetic, which was a departure from the current structure. The goal was to make the addition stand out, yet keep it in sync with the other campus facilities. “It was a bold gesture,” Conley states. “That’s what the client wanted.”

Conley said Beatty Construction embraced the challenge of something it wasn’t familiar with. “They took additional effort to learn the systems just as well as we did,” he recalls. Beatty Construction’s dedication to quality made an impression on Conley. “What really sticks with me is they do a good job,” he says. “They don’t want to just get done and get out. That’s something you find occasionally, but not as often as you like.”

All of these projects landed with Beatty Construction via hard bids, which is the norm for the company's workload. In fact, hard-bid work is the foundation for the company started by Beatty in 2000. Working in commercial construction since 1979, Beatty worked across the Eastern Seaboard building hospitals for large corporate contractors before settling in Atlanta in 1987. After working on the expansion at Grady Memorial Hospital in the 1990s, he went

technical capabilities. We're not fearful of anything."

Beatty references the above-mentioned MARTA Five Points Station project as the impetus for really spurring growth in the company. "It allowed us to hire a full-time estimator, Scott Schroeder," he remembers. "It allowed us to make that jump without incurring debt." The company also moved into its current offices at that time and, within just a year, hired a project manager, Elaine Truesdale.

"Our reputation is worth more than anything that we've got...because that's all we've got that separates us from our competition. It's our reputation for fairness."

to work for a smaller general contractor with the idea to learn more about the business side of construction. Five years later, he started Beatty Construction Company.

In the ensuing years, Beatty worked to build Beatty Construction up in volume and reputation with the bonding company in order to receive larger bonds. Hard-bid jobs in the form of government work offered the perfect avenue to achieve this goal. "My vast experience in hospital work grounded me real well for any type of construction," Beatty explains. "Much of our reputation has been through our

As luck would have it, Georgia Tech also became a prime source for hard-bid jobs. "We stayed there for seven years doing construction work," Beatty recalls. "Just this February was the first time since 2000 that we haven't been there." Although it has been less than 10 years since its inception, Beatty Construction has gone from bringing in \$2 million to \$3 million a year in revenue to grossing approximately \$10 million a year in revenue.

Although hard-bid contracts are awarded to the lowest price, Beatty Construction refuses to just settle for a paycheck



John Clemmer Photography

The outer shell of the Success Center is made of Kynartm-painted interlocking steel panels. The placement of the panels had to be exact to conform to the architectural design of the building.



John Clemmer Photography

The bookstore within the Success Center features six fabric-covered light fixtures, part of the building's unique look designed by The Facility Group architects.

after the job is done. “We strive to leave those people happy with us,” Beatty emphasizes. One way to accomplish this goal is by working with a variety of subcontractors that Beatty Construction trusts to do the job right and for the price provided in its estimate. “We don’t believe in fighting,” Beatty states. “We actually believe that a project should be the main focus. We know if somebody starts putting their ego in front, we’re going to have a problem.”

Ted Donnelly of Donnelly Electrical Services in Lawrenceville is one of those subcontractors, and he is quick to point out that, as a general contractor, Beatty demands quality work. However, he also appreciates the fact that Doug Beatty is a hands-on contractor who spends time at the jobsite himself. “If a decision has to be made, we don’t have to go through a lot of channels to get an answer,” Donnelly states. “It makes things flow much faster. If you’ve got a problem, he’ll help you figure out a way to solve it. He doesn’t just say, ‘It’s your problem, fix it!’ He’s really a pleasure to work with.”

Roger DeWeese, partner with The Haralson Group in Atlanta, has worked with Beatty Construction on projects at Georgia State University and appreciates the company’s work approach. “I’m comfortable working with Doug,” DeWeese says. “I know that he’s a team player. I’m not going to be in a situation where there’s an adversarial relationship. Doug’s primary goal is working with the client, as is mine.”

As a result, Beatty Construction is not afraid to walk away from projects if these types of situations arise. The company has a higher priority than racking up job after job, and that would be maintaining its reputation. “Our reputation is of

producing a product that works, one that is somewhat hassle-free during the construction process,” Beatty explains. “Our reputation is worth more than anything that we’ve got. We’ll do anything we can to preserve our reputation, because that’s all we’ve got that separates us from our competition. It’s our reputation for fairness.”

Hairston provides substance to this statement. “They are very customer-focused and run a very tight project,” he states. “Their project management skills are good, they stay on budget and they’re a good, honest, ethical contractor.”

As Beatty Construction continues to strengthen its reputation and relationships in the commercial construction industry, it also will continue to bid on those standard, routine hard-bid projects. But you can bet Beatty is keeping an eye out for those out-of-the-ordinary jobs that hold special appeal for him and his company. “We just like really unique stuff, and it’s too bad there’s not enough of it,” Beatty says. “It’s got high risk and high rewards.”

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