



# Choate Construction

Built on reputation, ethics and absolute integrity, scheduled and complex projects that most others

**A**sk William Millard Choate, president of Choate Construction Company, about his company's projects, and his enthusiasm for each one of them colors his words like a kaleidoscope. From medical buildings and university student housing to NASCAR race shops and senior living facilities, every project description comes with a healthy dose of excitement. "I like

generating things," Choate says. "I like, particularly, the front end of projects – getting them planned and properly executed. That's the key. Before you ever break ground, it's all planning and details."

In fact, Choate has spent much of his life planning projects. Prior to launching Choate Construction Company in 1989, he worked for 12 years as a managing partner with another firm.

Today, Choate Construction Company boasts an extensive résumé, servicing a wide variety of industries throughout the Southeast, including: corporate, healthcare, institutional, retail, biomedical, industrial, multi-family, senior living, student housing, water treatment, and automotive, among others. Some particularly unique projects include Metropolitan at Midtown (Charlotte, NC), The Dragway at Lowe's Motor Speedway (Concord, NC), Shepherd Center (Atlanta), and the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill Imaging Research Building.

**O**ne interesting and unusual area of work that has evolved for Choate comes from the automotive field. The company began by building some car dealerships for the Hendrick Automotive Group in Charlotte, N.C. As a result, Choate was subsequently contracted to build race shops for Hendrick Motorsports, owner of #5 (Casey Mears), #24 (Jeff Gordon), #48 (Jimmie Johnson) and

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Choate Construction began with a few interior construction projects and moved into medical projects. "The year 1989 was a bit of a recession period, so it forced us to go after anything and everything, which really sowed the seeds of diversity," Choate recalls.

As a result, Choate Construction has evolved into one of the largest general contractors in the Southeast. Services include preconstruction, construction, program management and design/build. The company specialty is fast-track, complex projects.

#88 (Dale Earnhardt Jr.) NASCAR teams. Thanks to referrals from these projects, Choate has constructed facilities for other NASCAR racing entities, including Roush Racing, Penske Racing South Inc., HAAS CNC Racing and JR Motorsports.

Currently, Choate is working on an innovative new facility called the Windshear Wind Tunnel. The completed project will feature a "rolling road" simulator that replicates the driving conditions of each track on the NASCAR circuit, up to 180 MPH,

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this general contractor specializes in  
may find difficult or even impossible.

allowing car engineers to tune the car's suspension. In addition, there will be a 200 MPH wind shear tunnel, where car engineers can test the aerodynamics of the racecar. "It's a very cool project," Choate says.

Another significant project is Parc at Buckhead, a 19-story, 183-unit luxury apartment development for adults 55 and older. The extremely tight schedule required completion of a floor every week in order to meet interim completion dates on the main tower, explains Ryan Rogusky, project manager.

Parc at Buckhead also required extensive attention to detail on the interior designs. For example, the furniture-grade wood paneling and millwork was custom-fit on site. Furthermore, not a single piece of wood throughout the first two floors was pre-fabricated or shop finished. In addition, the steel railings inside the lobby areas were custom-cut to the architect's artistic design out of plate steel on a plasma cutter in Pennsylvania.

Choate Construction Company received its notice to proceed on April 17, 2006, and substantial completion of the entire tower and occupancy occurred on Nov. 23, 2007. It was a tough challenge, but one Choate readily accepted.



*One of the nation's top catastrophic care and rehabilitation hospitals, The Shepherd Center is also one of the most complex projects Choate has ever built, consisting of an 8-story tower adjacent to and on top of the existing facility, followed by the renovation of the existing space. "Choate is a very responsible and sensitive contractor in the healthcare arena," stated Shepherd Center CEO James Shepherd. "I can highly recommend them for a healthcare project." The second phase, a resident facility and parking deck, are currently nearing completion.*

Obviously, Choate Construction Company is doing something right. For its president, it boils down to a few key points, with the most important being reputation. “Reputation is Everything,” Choate stresses. “That’s our mission statement and philosophy in three words. Once we have made a commitment, the client can take it to the bank.”

**A**n essential component of Choate Construction’s work comes along before the first shovel strikes the dirt. During preconstruction, Choate employees devote a great deal of time to cost and feasibility assessment – particularly structural, mechanical and electrical. They gather feedback in concept form, not final drawings, to comment and work on with the design team. The goal is to make sure they spend the client’s dollars wisely.

“Everything revolves around return on investment,” Choate says. “Does it make sense, and what’s the return going to be?”

Adhering to the contracted schedule, regardless of what obstacles pop up, also ranks high at Choate. “We will *not* be late,” Choate maintains. “It’s our lifeline.” Apparently,



*The Hendrick Motorsports 24 Race Shop in Concord, NC is a two-story office building that headquarters NASCAR racers Jeff Gordon, Jimmie Johnson and their teams. The building also features a racecar manufacturing and assembly area, and a public viewing area, complete with an actual section of a track crash fence and wall, for the display of the two drivers’ race cars and racing memorabilia.*

others in the industry agree. Choate Construction’s first project at The University of Georgia, an upscale 820 car parking deck, came with a very fast schedule – five months. At an early planning meeting, the architect for the job said, “There’s only one contractor who’s got a snowball’s chance.”

“That’s how we got introduced,” Choate recalls. “And then we built the facility, and they said, ‘Wow!’”

Choate Construction’s approach to each project certainly appealed to Roy Dickson, president of Parc Communities. Since 1999, he has worked with Choate Construction on three assisted and senior living communities. In particular, Dickson says he is very comfortable with Choate’s pricing capabilities. “I think Choate understands that a project is not possible unless it can be built for a feasible budget,” he says. “I believe that from top to bottom at Choate, they will be dedicated to bringing in any project on time and on budget. That’s what makes you go back.”

Dickson also likes Choate’s ability to have a fully committed team effort for each project.



*With their very first job being an interior build-out, Choate has always enjoyed their reputation for exquisite interior detail, such as the magnificent lobby in The Falls at Sanctuary Park, an office complex in Alpharetta. Choate Interiors is the largest interior contractor in the state, according to the Atlanta Business Chronicle.*



*Metropolitan at Midtown in Charlotte, NC blends residential, retail, restaurant, and office buildings to create a truly unique live-work-play atmosphere. Totalling over 1 million square feet, the project includes two condominium towers, a 10-story Class A office tower, 6-story parking deck, and a 2-story expansive retail center featuring several national retailers.*

He points out the company's great leadership, its great field-level supervision, the insight it brings to budgeting the job and the staff's outstanding knowledge of concrete work as prime assets. "Their very quick responsiveness to questions is one reason I've been most comfortable with Choate," he states.

Architect Craig James, principal and a founding partner of Praxis3, began working with Choate Construction Company almost 11 years ago. The project was a car dealership – Sutherlin Honda (now Team Honda) and led

Of course, Choate is the first to credit his people with much of the company's success. Employing more than 500 full-time employees at five regional offices (Atlanta, Charleston, S.C., Charlotte, N.C., Raleigh, N.C., and Savannah), Choate is proud to say that the company experiences very little turnover. In fact, 64 employees have been with the company for more than 10 years; 16 employees over 15 years. "We've been very fortunate to have retained good and dedicated people," Choate says.

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to more collaboration on not only automotive dealerships, but also, more recently, a 2600 space parking deck at Kennesaw State University.

James says he enjoys working with Choate because the company treats him and his employees as partners. "Choate has always been a team player with the design team and the owner," he explains. "Many times you find that the contractor only looks out for themselves. Choate has never been this way."

Perhaps this is due in part to the company's approach to finding the right person for this work and this industry. Rather than relying strictly on résumés and previous job experience, Choate looks for people with intensity, a sense of urgency, and an ability to get excited about their work. "I tell them, 'If you can't get fired up, don't consider us. It won't be a good match.' We look for people who care enough to take it personally, who care. I'll take that any day over experience."



*The Choate Construction Company management team. (Seated L to R): Greg Dills, Rob Hickman, Millard Choate, and Ben Bunyard. (Standing L to R): David Page, Bill Bland, Crosswell Brim, and Willis Armstrong*

For now, it looks as if all the right pieces are coming together for Choate Construction, a pattern that Choate hopes continues for the foreseeable future. His plans for Choate Construction? To adhere to the company's original principles and follow its rigid procedures, while continuing to refine them with newer technology and more efficient ways of doing things.

Choate also foresees growth and expansion for Choate Interior Construction, a division of the company providing interior construction services for new build-outs, renovations, historical preservation and design-build projects. "Our goal is to be the first phone call that a tenant, an owner or an architect makes when they've got a high-end project they need to fill quickly," Choate says. Choate was recently ranked the #1 Interior Contractor in Georgia.

Regardless of what lies ahead for Choate Construction, Choate is grateful for the company's – and his – success. "God has had a hand in it," Choate states. "Amazing things have come to pass when times have been lean. That's another facet of how we look at things."

In addition, Choate recognizes and understands that Choate Construction is a service company, one that supports everyone it works with and for, instead of following a hierarchical style of operation. For example, Choate makes sure clients have all manager's and supervisor's telephone numbers so they can call at any time with a question or concern. "Egos are in check," Choate declares. "We realize who brought us to the dance."

*Karon Warren is an Ellijay-based freelance writer who specializes in magazine feature writing, editing and proofreading. She can be reached at [karon@elijay.com](mailto:karon@elijay.com).*



**678-892-1200**

**[www.choateco.com](http://www.choateco.com)**