

CATEGORY: 9: Best Building Project – General Contractor (\$10 - \$40 Million)

PROJECT: FirstBank Headquarters Office Building and Parking Garage

GENERAL CONTRACTOR: Hyder Construction

Why This Project Should Win an ACE Award

Driving down West Colfax used to be a collection of 1-2 story offices, retail, and restaurants. Now as you crest the hill at View Point Road, the profile of the new \$34 million FirstBank office building dominates the skyline. With nothing else around matching its four stories, it has unobstructed views of Downtown Denver to the East and the Mountains to the West. What makes this high-profile project truly stand out, however, is its success in overcoming the challenges it faced being constructed on an occupied banking building operating 24/7 on a site with very limited access.

Project Description

FirstBank, the largest Colorado-based banking company, had headquarters-related business groups spread across multiple buildings, and wanted to consolidate to a single campus. A two-stage construction project was required to keep the headquarters operational on a tight site. First a 600-car parking structure was constructed on the north side of the site, and a small adjacent property was acquired to create a contiguous block for the development.

The second phase, a new 126,000 square-foot office building, tied-in to the original structure, more than doubles the size of the original building and includes staff amenities, such as a café, roof deck, and fitness center. The new addition needed to be fully integrated with the old building, but also allow for workspace qualities like daylight and views. To accomplish this objective the original building lobby was removed and the addition organized in a u-shape around a landscaped central courtyard, thus the first floor plate doesn't feel like any space is removed from the exterior. The architectural expression of the addition uses brick with punched windows to relate to the original building's material, and three-story massing and wraps that brick in a four-story curtain wall building that has a strong urban presence on Colfax Avenue. The curtain wall is accented with a grid of solar shading elements to break down the scale of the large façade. Energy efficient design was a goal and the project is targeting LEED Gold

designation. The finished building gives FirstBank a highly functional and efficient office space and a much more contemporary corporate image for their headquarters.

Solutions of Special Projects

This project occurred in an occupied banking building operating 24/7 on a site with very limited access. To avoid disrupting employees, the team gave the owner 24-hours' notice before any work commenced, utilized signed and barricaded quiet zones, immediately shut down work if it became too disruptive, and schedule additional night and weekend work to avoid disrupting weekly all-day board meetings. Because this building is a 24/7 banking facility, the building could not tolerate any loss of power. When one of the transformers had to be changed out, the project kept up constant communication with Xcel and utilized a diesel powered generator to keep the site up and running. Because the site, with very little lay-down area, was surrounded by streets with no parking, deliveries were-scheduled 24 hours in advance. Although working on such a restrictive site and building was challenging for the team, they successfully overcame this with detailed planning, thorough communication, flexibility, and off-hours work.

The dirt excavated from the office building addition was needed for the site work and building backfill, which wouldn't occur until several months after completing excavation. To avoid paying for the 2,000 yards of dirt twice, the team turned the excavation into a 15' flattened hill that served as the boneyard (material and equipment laydown area). Because of the tight site, the boneyard had to be incorporated into the emergency egress for the site. The team managed the area daily, keeping the path clear and flat, utilizing temporary fencing, and erecting overhead protection.

Lean scheduling techniques utilized on the project helped to keep the schedule on track. The team encountered significant weather in the early spring that affected the overall schedule as well as a significant structural issue that required rework. Although the delays were too significant to the overall schedule to be absorbed, the team communicated closely with the client to establish a new baseline schedule that worked for everyone. Once the new baseline schedule was agreed upon, the team worked feverishly and accomplished an on-time opening.

The team worked closely with FirstBank to evaluate costs and stay on budget. FirstBank added a significant amount of upgrades to the design well into the construction process. The team was able to incorporate these into the program with minimal impact to the overall schedule and in an extremely cost effective way, meeting the owner's added scope budget.

Excellence in Project Execution and Teamwork | Construction Innovations

The utility lines were within a foot of the new building's exterior foundation, where the team was drilling 30" caissons. The team hand-dug around the utilities and encased them in concrete, around 40 linear feet total. This was done with extreme caution and constant communication because contact with the strong electrical line could have caused a fatality. Damage to the fiber optic line would have led to a loss of banking abilities; this bank supports 120+ other branch banks. Even after these protective measures were in place, the entire team kept in constant communication to be aware of where we were drilling and to coordinate accurate layout and surveys.

This project is targeting LEED Gold. Employees reap the benefits of a healthier and improved working environment with features like low VOC materials, bicycle storage, an abundance of natural light, increased ventilation to all of the work spaces, and car charging stations in the garage. The client sees operating cost savings benefits with features like LED light fixtures with a fully programmable control system, daylight harvesting, an extremely efficient mechanical system, low water use plumbing, and a highly efficient unitized curtain wall system.

Technology was a great asset to the schedule on this project. The entire building was BIM modeled, which greatly reduced the number of clashes in the field and kept the project on track. The team utilized Hyder's proprietary electronic document management process, DocuLink, to keep subcontractors up-to-date and avoid delays.

To maintain high quality standards, the Hyder team employed exterior and interior superintendents, utilized BIM modeling for the entire project to avoid clashes, hired tradesmen very selectively, and had dedicated full-time QA/QC logging.

Environmental/Safety

Over 360,000 man hours were worked on this project, all without a single lost time accident or OSHA recordable incident.

The parking garage and new addition were both built while the existing facility was still occupied, and the addition was four-stories tall, so safety was extremely important on this job.

Our site-specific safety orientation, given to over 1,100 people, was vital to the success project. The orientation was based on Hyder's in-house program, developed on past similar projects. This project had a very strong culture of safety; everyone was empowered to stop the project if something was deemed unsafe. The Senior Superintendent enforced daily communication and would send employees home if they were in violation of project safety standards.

There were also some inherent challenges with this being a 4-story building. We had on-site fall protection training. The new roof RTUs were installed with a crane that had to have a 150' radius clear underneath it for safe swinging.

This project was a testing ground for a new smartphone safety app, Safety Reports, which the field personnel utilized daily on their iPads. The Safety Reports program provided important real-time safety information that everyone from the team could use to improve the overall safety culture on the project. The program was also essential in identifying and pre-task planning high-risk activities.

Hyder instituted an interactive safety award program to recognize workers who went above and beyond to correct unsafe work and promote safety. Barbeque luncheons were held several times to encourage safety.

In addition, Hyder held weekly safety meetings and daily tool-box talks. We also held daily huddles with the field foreman to go over logistics and construction and address any safety concerns. Each piece of unique equipment had its own specific safety orientation.

Safety audits included monthly internal audits by the general contractor and major trades, as well as random third party audits.

Excellence in Client Service & Contribution to Community

This project has been a huge benefit to the community and is a part of the West Colfax rejuvenation. There is an enlarged bus stop and a sidewalk for safer pedestrian travel. In addition, the team donated PVC and tarps to the Boy Scouts to help them build waterproof canoes, toured a construction class through the site, donated pink hardhats to breast cancer awareness, and maintained a positive relationships with neighbors by helping them with snow plowing and donating dirt and construction supplies.

This project is also a recipient of a Merit Award in the category of Office/Retail/Mixed-Use for ENR Mountain States Best Projects Awards.











