



Growing with its Clientele

FCL Builders Inc. – a design/build firm based in Itasca, Ill. – has expanded beyond its Chicago-area market as clients continue to seek its services outside of Illinois.

BY BRIAN SALGADO

FCL Builders Inc. may not have intended to extend its reach beyond a 100-mile radius of the Chicago area, but it did want to maintain relationships with clients as they continue to grow.

So as FCL Builders customers expand to markets such as Southern California and Florida, the company has found itself pursuing design/build construction projects in those areas, as well.

In 1993, FCL Builders' spun off from its parent, Center Point Properties, to remain a construction-focused firm specializing in design/build delivery of projects.

Today, FCL Builders is ranked 10th in the nation by *Engineering News-Record* for distribution and warehouse construction.

In addition, it is a well-known name in the Chicago construction market and beyond.

Mike Boro, president of FCL Builders, recently spoke with *Construction Today* about ventures into new markets, maintaining relationships with clients and a major project that is taking the company outside of its comfort zone.

Construction Today: What is your construction expertise?

Mike Boro: The majority of what we do is design/build, but we also do some plan and spec. Our core business is in industrial distribution and manufacturing construction, but we've diversified into some pretty unique things. We have done several office buildings; now we're doing retail and a few hotels.

We stepped outside of our core business years ago, by building some retail centers, several food processing plants and a couple of sports complexes, but 60 percent or more is still industrial.

CT: What is your current geographic reach?

MB: We have quite a bit of repetitive work with major developers throughout the Chicago area, and we can meet developers' needs inside and outside of the state. We're looking at Florida, South Carolina and Southern California to do work. We had an office in Las Vegas for a while. As of today, we have worked in Indiana, Wisconsin, Nevada and Georgia.

FCL Builders Inc.

www.fclbuilders.com

2005 sales: \$150 million

HQ: Itasca, Ill.

Employees: 100

Services: Design/build

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FCL BUILDERS INC.

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CT: What distinguishes your work?

MB: It is our ability to build buildings to our clients' requirements, within their budgets and in short, aggressive time frames. The jewel of this company is our production with each team building buildings in short time frames. Each project maintains the highest-quality standards and meets or exceeds our clientele needs.

We've focused on the development of our clientele. We have due diligence up front by focusing on the needs for developments and tenants specific to the users' needs, layouts, budgeting and scheduling. A majority of our work is now done up front. Our team does a good job assisting clients and analyzing what their needs are. Building in short periods of time becomes a challenge, and our guys do a real good job with it.

CT: How do you train your employees?

MB: We give opportunities for our employees to grow within, and back fill with younger, aggressive people. If you don't give them new responsibilities, you

will lose them to other companies.

Our training is different depending on the position. If it's in the field, laborers can become superintendents and down the road can become senior superintendents. Estimators can move from the junior to senior level. We typically have management overseeing if the growth exists.

We also have a safety program with OSHA-qualified instructors. The Chicago Manufacturing Campus project in Chicago was a development filled with safety concerns and environmental issues. Because our safety program was already in place, we were able to overcome every challenge that we faced there. In fact, our project ran so smoothly that the other contractors on the site adapted to our safety program.

CT: Tell us about a recent project that best exhibits your work.

MB: We're excited about a retail-hotel development in Northbrook (Ill.). It has 60 acres developed by two different developers. Challenges include acquisitions, approvals, layouts and assisting the developers in acquiring their tenants.

This is unique to what we're known

for. We've built some retail before, but being known for industrial, big-box warehouse and manufacturing, we're pursuing something entirely different. The installation of the brick and mortar may be different, but the company structures, policies and procedures to install are all the same. We look at this as a stepping stone to open new doors in this sector.

CT: How did you get involved in this project?

MB: We were working with a developer from San Francisco who was involved with self-storage projects. He acquired the rights to the property, and we assumed his position. We brought in Hamilton Partners because of its experience as a retail developer.

CT: What is your vision of the future?

MB: Our vision is continuing to grow with the growth of our clientele. We want to maintain the same level of service that we have always had and continue to be proactive to the needs of our clients. We will meet every opportunity head-on and through the ability and talents of our employees to overcome each and every challenge. ■