

# NORTH CAROLINA CONSTRUCTION

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NEWS

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## US Navy outlines strategy for \$1.7 billion in Hurricane Florence recovery projects at NC bases

**S.T. Wooten leads \$330 million I-40 Widening project from Southeast Raleigh to Clayton**

**AGC survey: More than 90% of NC contractors having trouble filling skilled craft positions**

**Off-site and modular building: The construction industry is at a tipping point**



# Publisher's Viewpoint



Mark Buckshon, publisher

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### NORTH CAROLINA CONSTRUCTION NEWS

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Deadlines are always a challenge in both the construction and publishing businesses. You certainly don't want to miss your submission deadline for a bid or RFP response – and if your project has a delivery time, the penalties for being late can be challenging.

I thought about these challenges as we were preparing this issue of North Carolina Construction News for publication.

Our lead story relates to the massive amounts of recovery work still to do from Hurricane Florence – and we were assembling the publication just as Hurricane Dorian began lashing the Outer Banks and eastern parts of the state.

The question: Should we rebuild the issue to cover Dorian, or leave things alone and focus on the Florence recovery efforts.

I decided the "leave things" option would make the most sense, especially since our story about Florence describes the tangible rebuilding opportunities for contractors and subtrades – while the news about Dorian is still developing.

We can certainly provide immediate coverage at the [nconstructionnews.com](http://nconstructionnews.com) website, but it sees more logical for us to focus on the longer-range rather than the short-term picture in this magazine.

And that is why we include Jacob D'Albora's story about the construction industry's "tipping point" towards modular construction – tied in with climate change and labour shortages – which relate of course to hurricanes and this issue's other major story describing the challenges contractors are having in filling both skilled and salaried jobs in the state.

Next issue, we'll undoubtedly have coverage about the Dorian recovery effort and cost.

I always appreciate your feedback and responses as well as story suggestions. You can email me at [buckshon@nconstructionnews.com](mailto:buckshon@nconstructionnews.com).

**S.T. Wooten leads \$330 million I-40 Widening project from Southeast Raleigh to Clayton** **3**

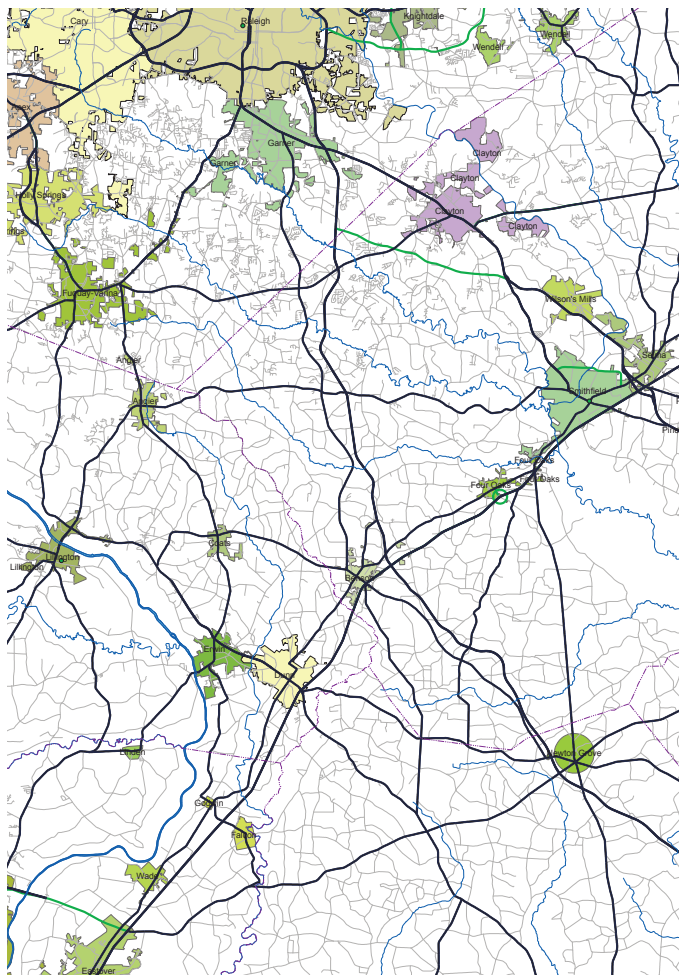
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# S.T. Wooten leads \$330 million I-40 Widening project from Southeast Raleigh to Clayton

S.T. Wooten says it is spearheading the \$330 million widening and re-design project to improve traffic on I-40. In conjunction with the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), the project will cover 12.8 miles of the highway extending from the I-440 beltline in Raleigh to N.C. 42 in Johnston County. The project began in the fall of 2018 and will be completed in 2022.

The contractor is adding lanes throughout the project – expanding four-lane sections to eight lanes, and six-lane sections to 10 lanes. As for the existing lanes, crews will add on to them with 9.5 inches of asphalt overlay. Crews will also make changes to improve the interchange at N.C. 42, converting it to an innovative Diverging Diamond Interchange. This unique design, in which two di-



rections of traffic cross briefly to the left side of the road, will help increase traffic flow and allow free-flowing turns onto the interstate.

In addition to building the Diverging Diamond Interchange along with several other interchanges, the project includes construction of 15 bridges. One of these will be a new flyover bridge from I-440 to I-40 east bound and the installation of two new bridges for the Diverging Diamond Interchange at NC 42.

A company spokesperson says, with up to 10,000 cars passing through the I-40 project zone each day, it is getting creative to keep traffic flowing smoothly during construction.

“The team will construct a unique temporary access ramp that will run from a closed highway bridge down into the median, which will ultimately save 34,500 loads from being hauled in traffic,” a news release submitted by the contractor says. “An additional 7,600 loads will be saved thanks to a conveyor that will run from the asphalt plant straight to the construction zone.

The statement continues: “By the time it is completed, the I-40 design-build job will touch every division at S.T. Wooten. That includes more than 250 construction crew members working alongside those of the 20 plus subcontractors working on the project. Construction crew managers will be meeting frequently and communicating constantly with the NCDOT to ensure each milestone is met and the job gets done right.”

# AGC survey: More than 90% of NC contractors having trouble filling skilled craft positions



North Carolina Construction News staff writer

More than nine in 10 North Carolina contractors report they are having “a hard time filling some or all positions” for construction tradespeople, according to a survey from the Associated General Contractors (AGC) of America and Autodesk.

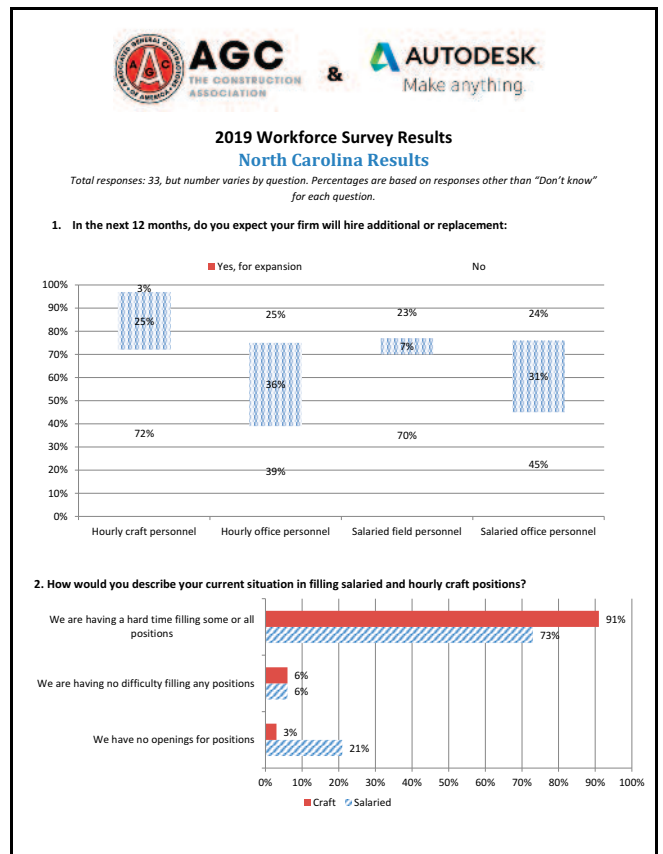
The story for salaried positions is a little less severe — with 73 percent saying they are having trouble filling openings, but that discrepancy is explained by the fact that many contractors simply don’t need more salaried workers right now.

## [The detailed 2019 AGC workforce survey results for North Carolina](#)

The sample size isn’t huge — only 33 — but the data suggests only six percent of contractors are having “no difficulty in filling any positions.”

The AGC data suggests that the labor shortage in North Carolina is slightly more severe than the nation as a whole at 80 percent.

AGC officials said the industry was taking a range of steps to address the situation but called on federal officials to take steps to assist those industry efforts.



“Workforce shortages remain one of the single most significant threats to the construction industry,” said Stephen E. Sandherr, AGC’s chief executive officer. “However, construction labor shortages are a challenge that can be fixed, and this association will continue to do everything in its power to make sure that happens.”

Nationally, of the nearly 2,200 survey respondents, 80 percent said they are having difficulty filling hourly craft positions, Sandherr said. All four regions of the country are experiencing similarly severe craft worker shortages, with 83 percent of contractors in the West and South reporting a hard time filling hourly craft positions, almost identical to the 81 percent rate in the Midwest and 75 percent rate in the Northeast.

In North Carolina, the data indicates two-thirds (66 percent) of contractors say they are having trouble filling positions for project managers and supervisors, while 45 percent say there are difficulties in finding quality control personnel and 39 percent report challenges in recruiting Environmental compliance professionals.

Among trades, there is a 100 percent shortage of pipelayers, iron workers, drywall installers and bricklayers, while several other trades and crafts also in extremely short supply. The only categories reporting less than 50 percent hiring difficulty are millwrights and traffic control personnel.

Most contractors report that they expect it will either continue to be hard to find workers, or even more difficult than before. Contractors report the pipeline for adequately trained skilled workers is poor, with 55 percent saying it is inadequate.

Disturbingly, 34 percent report there are problems with workers being able to pass drug tests, and 30 percent say they are having difficulties with background checks.

In response to the labor shortage, 88 percent of North Carolina’s surveyed contractors have raised pay rates for craft workers in the past year. They are also engaging with career building programs (64 percent), using staffing firms (45 percent) and engaging with government workforce development or unemployment agencies (33 percent) among other measures.

Nationally, Autodesk says contractors are also working to increase productivity.

“Construction workforce shortages are prompting many firms to innovate their way to greater productivity,” said Allison Scott, head of construction integrated marketing at Autodesk. “As the cost of labor continues to increase and firms look to become even more efficient, technology can enable better collaboration and ultimately lead to more predictable outcomes. There is also opportunity in untapped pools of talent such as tradeswomen, veterans, and young people looking for an alternative to the traditional four-year university.”

Scott noted that 29 percent of firms report they are investing in technology to supplement worker duties.

One-fourth of firms report they are using cutting-edge solutions, including drones, robots and 3-D printers. Meanwhile, 23 percent of firms report they are taking steps to improve jobsite performance by relying on lean construction techniques, using tools like Building Information Modeling and doing more off-site prefabrication.

Even as the industry works to address labor shortages, 44 percent of firms report they are increasing construction prices and 29 percent are putting longer completion times into their bids for new work because of the lack of workers, putting future development and infrastructure projects at risk.

Association officials called on the federal government to boost funding for career and technical education. They also called on federal leaders to allow more immigrants to enter the country to work in construction, let construction students at community and career colleges qualify for federal Pell Grants, and make it easier for firms to establish apprenticeship and other training programs.

One reason for their worries is that contractors are skeptical of the quality of the pipeline for recruiting and preparing new craft personnel. Nationally, 45 percent say the local pipeline for preparing well-trained and skilled workers is poor. And 26 percent say the pipeline for finding workers who can pass a drug test is poor.



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# US Navy outlines strategy for \$1.7 billion in Hurricane Florence recovery projects at NC bases

North Carolina Construction News staff writer

The US Navy has outlined what is described as an “aggressive \$1.7 billion military construction program” to restore Marine Corps Base (MCB) Camp Lejeune and Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Cherry Point, N.C. in the wake of Hurricane Florence.

Rear Adm. Dean VanderLey, Commander, U.S. Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC) Atlantic, set the tone for a day-long industry day on Aug. 20, saying: “Today, I’m going to challenge you.”

“We are facing a tremendous challenge with the volume of work we are trying to put into North Carolina,” VanderLey said as he addressed more than 400 industry professionals representing 230 businesses attending NAVFAC Mid-Atlantic’s forum.

“I don’t know if anyone has tried to award over \$2 billion worth of

work in two years, but it’s a tremendous challenge. We, the government, we, the Navy, and we, NAVFAC, cannot do it by ourselves. The only way we can do that is in close partnership with you.”

Businesses of all size and description attended the event hosted by the North Carolina Military Business Center at the Harris Conference Center in Charlotte, to learn NAVFAC Mid-Atlantic’s strategy for the restoration and rebuilding of facilities at the two bases following catastrophic damage caused by Hurricane Florence in September 2018.

Hurricane Florence, formerly a category four hurricane, had degraded to a category one storm by the time it slammed into the southeastern coast of North Carolina dumping up to 36 inches of rain on the region. Between MCB Camp Lejeune and MCAS Cherry Point, the storm damaged more than 800

facilities, washed out railroad trestles and road culverts, eroded training beaches and damaged approximately 800 miles of power lines.

NAVFAC Mid-Atlantic’s work in support of Marine Corps Installations – East got underway immediately following the passage of Hurricane Florence.

“I was going to refer to this event as the ‘kick-off’ to the restoration phase, said VanderLey in welcoming participants to the industry day. “But I was reminded that Mid-Atlantic had already awarded over \$700 million in projects this year. This isn’t really a kick-off, because Mid-Atlantic is already going full steam.”

The steps of recovery following an event like Hurricane Florence cover three phases: Respond, Repair and Replace. Clean up operations immediately following the storm was a primary objective of Respond, followed by assessment of the extent of storm damage and the restoration of essential life, health and safety services.

The recovery phase transitioned into the repair phase as NAVFAC contractors focused their efforts on returning operations to a degree of normalcy. This included repairs to facilities and infrastructure that were damaged by the storm, but did not require complete replacement.

The industry day represents the transition to replace, the final phase of recovery. This phase involves Military Construction (MILCON) projects to replace facilities and infrastructure damaged beyond economic repair, which may include aircraft hangers, training and maintenance facilities, barracks and headquarters facilities, and extensive work on infrastructure supporting information technology and transportation.



Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC) Mid-Atlantic outlined the Navy’s strategy for the rebuilding and reconstruction of facilities on Marine Corps Base (MCB) Camp Lejeune and Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Cherry Point, in the wake of Hurricane Florence. More than 400 individuals representing 230 construction-related businesses learned of the Navy’s plans to award 31 military construction projects valued at \$1.7 billion during the meeting (US Navy photo)



*Scott Dorney, executive director of the North Carolina Military Business Center (left) moderated a panel discussion of NAVFAC Mid-Atlantic capital improvements and acquisition professionals led by Capt. Richard Hayes, Commanding Officer (second from right). The panel discussion outlined the Navy's plans to restore Marine Corps Base (MCB) Camp Lejeune and Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Cherry Point, in the wake of Hurricane Florence. The panel discussion was part of NAVFAC Mid-Atlantic's Hurricane Florence Recovery industry day held in Charlotte, on Aug. 20. (US Navy photo)*

The work required on the bases is complex and expensive, and creates special challenges for the Marine Corps and Navy team tasked with the restoration, according to Col. Nicholas Davis, Chief of Staff for Facilities and Environment, Marine Corps Installations – East.

"You don't want an infantryman's answer (to this problem), because I'll tell you we can do it with blue tarps and a shovel," said Davis in his remarks. "That's how we live forward. But we shouldn't make our families live that way and we shouldn't make our forces who are training to go back into the fight live that way. This is really important and we have to get it right. We don't get a second chance."

The magnitude of the restoration work extends far beyond the levels typically managed by NAVFAC Mid-Atlantic, explained Capt. Richard Hayes, commanding officer, NAVFAC Mid-Atlantic.

"For rough scale, NAVFAC Mid-Atlantic, in 2017, the year before Hurricane Florence, did \$2.2 billion worth of construction across the entire Mid-Atlantic area of operations," said Hayes. "When one of your customers tells you he's going to go get \$2.1 billion (to support the MILCON projects), you tend to say 'yeah, sure. I'm not going to worry about that just yet.' Then here comes the email that says 'we got it!'"

"Now I get with my team and say 'let's really sharpen the pencil,'" said Hayes.

Hayes stated that NAVFAC Mid-Atlantic's goal for the industry day was to explain their strategy to carry out the Replace phase, which includes the design and construction of 31 different construction projects valued at \$1.7 billion.

Hayes pointed out that more than \$700 million has already been committed to projects, primarily for buildings requiring maintenance, major repairs, and small or minor construction, with another \$200 million more by the end of September 2019.

NAVFAC Mid-Atlantic Capital Improvements and Contracting experts outlined the scope of work anticipated and took on board questions, setting the stage for industry's expertise to further refine and shape the work ahead.

Many of the companies attending the industry day have been involved in work at MCB Camp Lejeune and MCAS Cherry Point since the early days of storm recovery.

Hayes made a direct appeal to industry attendees to work closely with their military partners to provide recommendations for process improvements in support of the ambitious construction program.

"We want your feedback on how we can execute the MILCON program in FY20. This is a departure from our typical way of doing business, but we are committed to making it a success for our warfighter, the Marine Corps."

# CENTEC comes to North Carolina with new office in Denver

By *Carolyn Gruske*  
*North Carolina Construction News*  
special feature

Western North Carolina's booming development environment means demand has increased for engineering services, so CENTEC Engineering, PLLC has opened an office in the area, in Denver.

As a civil engineering firm, CENTEC specializes in civil site development engineering, and also offers a wide variety of other services including solid waste engineering, storm water permitting, and construction monitoring for residential, industrial and commercial sites.

With more than 30 years in the industry, the company has vast experience designing roads, parking lots, drainage structures and utilities (including water and sewer, gas, and electrical).







CENTEC's site development work includes developing construction plans and specifications for either negotiated (design-build) work or work that will be bid out to contractors. It's a service that CENTEC can offer while keeping costs down and still providing timely, accurate service because it embraces technology and modern, efficient ways of conducting business, explains CENTEC owner Joe Sulesky.

"I have a new school business model. The old school business model was where you had to have receptionists and secretaries and in-house accountants and all these types of people in these overhead positions. And that was true 30 or 40 years ago, but now with technology and how quickly things can get done, you don't need all the overhead. So we're very streamlined."

Being streamlined means CENTEC is able to keep its costs down and its budgets tight, all to the ben-

efit of its customers.

Even though it's a small and nimble company, CENTEC has worked on projects of all scopes and sizes. Some of the larger ones involved overall budgets of \$20 million and 250-acre sites. Some of the smaller ones involved as little as half-acre office sites.

Based in Beckley, West Virginia, CENTEC has worked on sites in Maryland and throughout Virginia, the Carolinas, and Tennessee.

"We're experienced dealing with a wide variety of government agencies—local, state and federal—the agencies that regulate this type of work," says Sulesky.

He adds that it makes sense for CENTEC to be part of the region's construction community.

"The area around Denver is a hotbed of development. There is so much growth," says Sulesky explaining that Lake Norman and Duke Power Company are two of the rea-

sons why the area is so attractive to developers.

"There's an enormous amount of development around Lake Norman, and Denver is this fairly small, still fairly rural town on the western side of Lake Norman. Development started on the eastern side of the lake and it's moving along the north side and the south side and it's going to come along to the west side where Denver is, so Denver is centrally located within all this development."

As the owner, Sulesky is putting his name out to potential partners and clients as a testament to CENTEC's commitment to customer service and quality.

"I'm the face of the company. I own the company. I'm involved in all the decisions, so there's no hierarchy of people that a potential client is dealing with that doesn't have ownership in the company."

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The CENTEC staff has over 30 years of experience, with Professional Engineering registrations throughout the Mid-Atlantic states. Our commercial, industrial and residential development projects range from one acre to 100+ acres from the shores of the Chesapeake Bay, through the coalfields of Appalachia to the Piedmont of the Carolinas.

# Sarah Carson combines passion for justice with logical approach to construction law

*Staff writer  
North Carolina Construction News  
special feature*

Appreciating the logical, black and white nature of construction law and having a passionate desire to see justice done may seem like two opposing views, but for Sarah Carson, they're a natural fit.

Holding the title of of-counsel with Smith, Currie & Hancock LLP—a firm that only does construction law work—Carson has handled cases worth millions of dollars (including one where she represented a contractor in arbitration with the owner concerning a \$15 million roofing installation contract and one where she negotiated contracts and litigated actions on behalf of owner regarding a mixed-use apartment community



valued at \$81 million), but the size of the case doesn't matter to her. The facts of the case do.

"In terms of righting wrongs, I'll help somebody with a \$25,000 claim. Nobody should be taken advantage of regarding the amount of the claim. That's the reason why I became a lawyer: to right those wrongs regardless of the amount at issue. If you negotiated for a certain result and suddenly a subcontractor disappears, it's not fair for anyone regardless of the size of the company to have to absorb those costs," says Carson.

That drive to right wrongs has been with Carson throughout her career. While working at her first firm after law school, she says she encountered a lot of situations where people tried to take advan-

tage of government contracting rules.

"Too often, private contractors try to take advantage of the federal government or of state governments by lying about the amount of women-owned small businesses so they can get a contract. I can't tell you the number of 'women-owned small businesses,' where the woman is just on paper. It's someone's wife who has absolutely nothing to do with it. And those businesses are taking away opportunities from another company or contractor that truly is qualified. And that was frustrating and brought out in me the need to fight and right the wrongs that so often happen in government contracts and in private contracts."

Carson says that construction law offers all parties involved the benefit of being clear cut with defined goals.



"There is a structure in place in from the very beginning of the contract that you want to build upon," she says. "You have a map in terms of the contract and there are expectations and rules from which everybody is supposed to abide by, and when one veers off that path, it's an opportunity to put them back on that right path."

As a woman working in construction law, Carson has had plenty of opportunities to demonstrate to fellow lawyers, contractors, and other members of the industry, that women in general should be taken seriously, and that Carson in particular should be regarded as an expert who gets results. She mentions her first trial where opposing counsel took a look at her and told his client that a woman meant a slam-dunk victory. He, of course, was wrong.

"When you're already being underestimated, you're going to work twice as hard to prove them wrong. And from that point forward, they develop a new respect and a new understanding of female attorneys and of my abilities."

Carson says she's even encountered situations where people on the opposite sides of cases she has tried have approached her after seeing her skills in the courtroom and asked her to work for them. After taking them on as clients, she successfully gets results their male lawyers couldn't.

The respect she has earned from her work in court has been far reaching, as lawyers from across the nation have called upon her for



© CAN STOCK PHOTO / GYN9988

consultation or advice after hearing one of her closings or reading reports of one of her arguments.

Carson also shares her expertise with law students, and has taught construction law at both the graduate and undergraduate level. She also publishes articles and opinions, and has articles published in engineering and law journals.

As a member of the North Carolina Bar Association's Legislation Committee, she has a deep familiarity with changes to the law and what those changes mean for her clients. Next year, for example, general contractors will be required to have a set-number of continuing education hours, and Carson is able to explain exactly what that means and how to best accomplish the requirement.

Having worked with a vast range of clients, from those involved in casino projects, mixed-use developments, and even overseas (including Afghanistan) and local military bases, Carson has a level of firsthand knowledge that clients appreciate.

"I have the experience and assertiveness to understand what these clients are experiencing in the construction industry. I've had boots on the ground to see the hurdles.

"I've got experience from drafting the contract to litigation and mediation and every step of the way, I can help a client succeed in terms of delivering a project on time, on budget and for maximum profitability with the minimum of claim," she says.

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# Off-site and modular building: The construction industry is at a tipping point

By Jacob D'Albora

Special to North Carolina Construction News

*"The tipping points that magical moment when an idea, trend or social behavior crosses a threshold, tips and spreads like a wild fire." (Malcolm Gladwell)*

The construction industry is notoriously known as one of the slowest industries to accept change and evolve with recent technology. Even looking outside of a monitor screen, the industry is still resistant to assistance from technology in progressing manual labor which has always been the foundation of building buildings. This is about to change.

The construction industry is at a tipping point. What is this tipping point? What is the revolution that is about to spread across the built

world?

*Off-site construction. The process of planning, designing and fabricating building elements at a site other than the final location, creating a more rapid and efficient construction of a permanent structure.*

The key is this tipping point is not happening because the industry has finally accepted progressive ideas and found a willingness to try the new methodologies. This tipping point, or what Gladwell refers to as that magical moment, will be forced out of an act of urgency and survival by three main factors:

- Labor force
- Rising construction costs
- Global warming

## **Labor force**

The current labor pools have almost dried up and the cause is directly correlated to the push for all

high school students to go to college and earn a degree. As noble as that sounds, the act has been a detriment not just to the construction and other industries but to the young adults that were pushed that direction. Numerous studies show the debt that student loans accrue and the burden these individuals live with. Sometimes for the rest of their life.

*"As man as 40 per cent of borrowers could default on their student loans by 2023." (H. Hoffower from the Business Insider.)*

Some studies have cross referenced this data with the labor shortage in the construction industry, showing that trade schools graduates earn more on average than their new graduates with a four-year B.A. degree. Contractors and own-



ers will be forced to get more creative with projects and procurement methods with the construction occupation market projected to grow 11 percent from 2016 to 2026, a gain of 747,600 new jobs, according to data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics.

### Construction costs

In June of 2019, McKinsey & Company released a report on modular construction, one of the key pieces of off-site construction methodologies. Within this report McKinsey compares the current growth of construction costs, 2.5% growth in 2018 which is twice the rate of other industries, and the savings that modular construction provides.

Advantages to modular construction, McKinsey wrote, are that it can deliver projects 20% to 50% faster than traditional methods; a potential for costs savings of up to 20%... and as ripe market around the world ready for this kind of disruption."

In the last two years, material and labor costs have grown faster than contractors' bid for work causing contractors to have thinner profit margin, according to this published report.

The two goliaths, owners and contractors, of the construction industry are quickly coming to an impasse. One that can be mitigated with the implementation of off-site construction.

### Global warming

The summer of 2019 has been considered record setting temperatures across the United States. The National Weather Service has even declared the June of 2019 the hottest June ever including 90-degree weather in Anchorage, AL. These factors bring major risk not to just costs of construction but also the safety of employees. See this published report. Contractors, like Choate Construction, are during concrete pours at 2 a.m. to avoid the risks involved with the heat at their Nashville jobsite.



### Off-site construction

The current economy is forcing the construction industry to keep up and due to the recent recession, no one is volunteering to take their foot off the gas. These three factors combined are forcing the key decision makers to become opportunistic.

Off-site construction can be compared to how IKEA manufactures their own furniture. Create a series of components and provide instructions on how to put them together. Now apply that concept to a building. Through construction technology known as BIM (Building Information Modeling) contractors are virtually building a construction ready model virtually, then dissecting it into a series of components that make up the overall building.

The term off-site refers to the process of being able to manufacture the series of components inside a warehouse where weather, construction quality and processes are controlled and streamlined. Two of the larger pushes within off-site construction are prefabrication and modular.

Prefabrication refers to the IKEA process. A full run of piping within the building is virtually built and then manufactured off-site. The components are labeled sent to the site with instructions (Component A connects to Component B) and installed.

Modular refers to producing full sections of a building. Repetitive items found within a building a repeated built in an assembly line with all trades involved. AC Marriott is a leader in this process producing the full hotel room (all the down to installed bedframes and box springs) inside a warehouse. After being shipped to site and the units are stacked on top of another creating the form of the building as well as the units inside.

Both of those examples reduce field labor and construction costs while providing the ability to control weather and risk.

Back to the tipping point. The industry cannot afford to be slow to adopt. It can no longer have an unwillingness to change or evolve.

If anything, McKinsey & Company has produced the ice breaker for the construction industry. The discussion has become real and reinforced behind the McKinsey & Company name. Does anybody else see a tipping point?

*Jacob D'Albora is director of BIM-FM Services and associate vice-president at McVeigh & Mangum Engineering, Inc. in Charlotte, NC. He can be reached by email at [jdalbora@mcveighmangum.com](mailto:jdalbora@mcveighmangum.com) or by phone at (704) 547-9035. Story copyrighted by the writer, and republished here with permission.*

# THE TOP 10 CONTRACTOR INDUSTRY LEADERS OF NORTH CAROLINA

**NORTH CAROLINA  
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1/4 page	+ \$150.00
1/3 page	+ \$225.00
1/2 page	+ \$275.00
Full page	+ \$475.00

# NC students win SkillsUSA Gold Medals; prepare for international competition

*North Carolina Construction News staff writer*

North Carolina's masonry apprentices and students continued to lead the nation in awards and medals at this year's 55<sup>th</sup> Annual SkillsUSA National Leadership and Skills Conference in Louisville.

Ashton White made history as the first woman to repeat as National Gold Metal Champion, the North Carolina Masonry Contractors Association (NCMCA) reports in its newsletter. She had earned the post-secondary title in 2018 and won again this year.

Meanwhile, Grant Helms won the Gold Metal in the competition's high school division.

Rodney Harrington at West Rowan High School instructed both White and Helms. They earned the opportunity to represent North Carolina at the national competition by winning their respective division titles at the April 2019 North Carolina SkillsUSA State Conference in Greensboro.

White spent the summer working for Gates Construction Company and will be studying construction management this fall at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

"There's a lot of things that make me happy about masonry," Ashton told the NCMCA. "I love getting to go out and explore, and meeting new people everywhere I go. There are different techniques that people use, it's always changing, there is always a better way. I love that it is so hands on."

Helms, a senior at West Rowan High School, has also enjoyed success at previous masonry competi-



*Kelby Thornton*

*Photograph by Todd Hartsell*

tions.

NCMCA workforce development and training coordinator Ryan Shaver serves as co-chair for the SkillsUSA National Masonry Competition.

"SkillsUSA allows students to get involved in extra-curricular activities like football, baseball and basketball. Except they actually get to showcase the skills they learned at the schools and compete and move on and start their careers," he said in the NCMCA newsletter.

"That's exactly what I did. I played bricklaying in high school. I still play bricklaying today."

With the 2019 wins, North Carolina's national medal count stands at 38 Gold, 15 Silver and two Bronze.

Skills USA serves more than 360,000 students and instructors annually.

Meanwhile, as the NCMCA newsletter was going to press, North Carolina's Kelby Thornton was in Kazan, Russia, to represent the US in masonry at the 45<sup>th</sup> WorldSkills Competition.

Thornton has been preparing for the contest with his coach, USA WorldSkills Team masonry expert Todd Hartsell of Central Cabarrus High School in Concord. Thornton's a two-time National SkillsUSA Masonry Champion. He won the Masonry Gold Medal as a junior and as a senior in 2016 and 2017 respectively.

# Kelli Goss: From architect to construction attorney

By *Carolyn Gruske*  
*North Carolina Construction News*  
special feature

General contractors and design firms hiring Kelli Goss as an attorney end up with a two-for-one bonus. Not only is Goss a construction litigator, she's also an architect.

Goss is a licensed architect in North Carolina and an active member in the American Institute of Architects. Prior to law school she was a principal in a major Raleigh design firm for a number of years.

"I always performed construction administration on all my projects," she says.

Now, as a lawyer, she is a partner at Conner Gwyn Schenck PLLC,



a firm that primarily practices construction law. Combining these two professions means Goss is able to work in two fields she is passionate

about, all while giving clients the benefits of her training, experience, and combination of skills.

"When somebody comes to me and to this firm they are getting an attorney that also has other life experiences in

construction—to have successfully addressed issues that have arisen on a project and to know how to read drawings and specifications is an asset in practicing construction law. It goes a long way with clients looking for somebody to help them when they have issues on a construction site," says Goss.

Although Goss is a litigator, she

believes there is value in preventing clients from going to court in the first place.

"We review contracts for our clients. Our goal is to be there for our clients before they even get into trouble. I like to work with clients on the front end and review their contracts and subcontracts. We go through them and make sure they best protect our clients."

Goss says she prefers taking a straight and direct approach with her clients and with opposing counsel. It's an approach that makes sense to her because the construction industry is small enough that it's likely she'll encounter the same people on future jobs, cases or projects.

That sense of directness and openness also served her well on the job site, when she often found herself as the only woman in the





construction trailer, and the person tasked with construction administration responsibilities.

Even now, Goss finds that being open with clients about her qualifications and her background makes her job as a woman working in construction law easier.

"It is common when I meet with contractors that they start trying to explain something to me about the project in a simplified manner because they think I'm just a female attorney who doesn't know anything about construction, but all I have to do is say, 'would it help you out to know that I'm also a licensed architect and I practised for years.' Their response is usually, 'thank God, yes.' Then they roll on with the terminology and everything that happened with regards to the construction and the project.

Goss is admitted to practice in North Carolina State and Federal Courts, the U.S. Court of Appeals



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for the Fourth Circuit, the Court of Federal Claims, and the United States Supreme Court.

She is an active member of a number of professional organizations dedicated to advancing and promoting construction law, including the American Bar Association's Forum on Construction Law (serving on its Division 13 steering com-

mittee) and the American Institute of Architects. She has also spoken at national conferences on the topic of construction law. Locally, she was an appointed member of the Raleigh Appearance Commission, a commission that reviews new construction projects in the city, and served four years on this commission.

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**Developer to break ground for Raleigh Crossing**

The Fallon Co. plans to break ground on Raleigh Crossing, its 1.86-acre mixed-use development in downtown Raleigh, in September

Raleigh Crossing will offer a mix of commercial, residential, retail and hospitality uses. It will feature: 280,000 sq. ft. of trophy office space; 18,000 sq. ft. of retail; 165-room hotel; 135-unit apartment community; an expansive, flexible outdoor amenity terrace; and expanded sidewalks and an activated ground level.



The company plans to break ground on the first phase of the project in September. The first phase calls for the development of a first-class commercial tower located at 301 Hillsborough St.

Designed by Duda | Paine Architects, the first phase will offer more than 280,000 sq. ft. of prime office space, public amenities with outdoor and indoor seating, a modern fitness studio, and 12,500 sq. ft. of retail.

The second phase of the project will be comprised of hotel and residential offerings, including more than 7,000 sq. ft. of retail space. The pedestrian-oriented mixed-use community will span nearly a full city block and offers an outdoor amenity level for multi-purpose use, including fitness classes and community events.

**CMPD upgrading headquarters, getting new station**

Charlotte City Council has approved nearly \$1 million for safety upgrades to the headquarters of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department on East Trade St. and approved construction contract for new station.

Upgrades include ballistic resistant doors and windows, a larger public vestibule, a new customer service counter and waiting room and minor electrical and mechanical updates, reports the *Charlotte Observer*.

Catalyst Construction Co. was awarded a \$950,280 contract for the safety upgrades project.

In addition, the city council also approved a more than \$9.5 million contract with Miles-McClellan Construction Co. for the new location of CMPD's University City Division Station.

The division will move into the planned 16,081-sq.-ft. facility at 8452 N. Tryon St. The project is expected to be completed in late 2020.

**Pfizer invests \$500 million to expand in Sanford facility**

Pfizer has announced plans to invest an additional half-billion dollars for the construction of its state-of-the-art gene therapy manufacturing facility in Sanford.

By expanding its manufacturing footprint in Sanford, the company expects to strengthen its ability to produce and supply both clinical- and commercial-scale quantities of critical, potentially life-changing gene therapy medicines to patients living with rare diseases around the world.

The plant would expand the company's presence in North Carolina, where there are currently more than 3,600 Pfizer colleagues, including 650 in Sanford. The expanded facility is projected to add approximately 300 new jobs.

The new space would help advance Pfizer's work in manufacturing highly specialized, potentially one-time gene therapies that use custom-made recombinant adeno-associated virus (rAAV) vectors.

Pfizer is expanding its end-to-end capabilities in gene therapy in North Carolina by investing in facilities focused on all stages of research, development, and manufacturing.

The company did not disclose any construction details and timeline.



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**NDOT plans for the future:  
2020-2029 Statewide  
10-Year Transportation  
Plan released**

The 2020-2029 Statewide 10-Year Transportation Plan is out, and it is ambitious in scope.

It includes more than 1,700 projects affecting all transportation modes in every county in the state. The overall statewide list includes 1,319 highway projects, 86 aviation, 234 bike and pedestrian, six ferry, 23 public transit and 50 rail projects selected on statewide, regional and division levels.

From a financial perspective, it lists 200 projects worth about \$2.5 billion that are expected to be awarded in fiscal year 2019-2020.



**Xerox to build in Cary**

Xerox Corp. is setting up a Center of Excellence in Wake County.

The printer and document management company already has three North American Centers of Excellence (located in Palo Alto, CA, Webster, NY; and Toronto, Canada) and

the new facility planned for Cary will be its fourth.

“The opening of our fourth Center of Excellence is an essential investment in Xerox’s long-term future. This is a new multifunctional center that will be focused on accelerating our digital journey,” said Naresh Shanker, chief technology officer, Xerox.

“Being home to a host of tech companies and educational institutions, North Carolina was a logical choice for us.”

Making the official announcement Governor Roy Cooper said that Xerox will invest \$18.4 million in the project and will create 600 jobs.

“Xerox, which had many locations to choose from, selected North Carolina because they know we can offer the highly-skilled workers they need, both now and in the future,” said Cooper.

According to a statement from the governor’s office, because Xerox chose to locate in Wake County, which is classified by the state’s economic tier system as Tier 3, the company’s Job Development Investment Grant (JDIG) agreement also calls for moving as much as \$4,108,250 into the state’s Industrial Development Fund—Utility Account. The Utility Account helps rural communities finance necessary infrastructure upgrades to attract future business.

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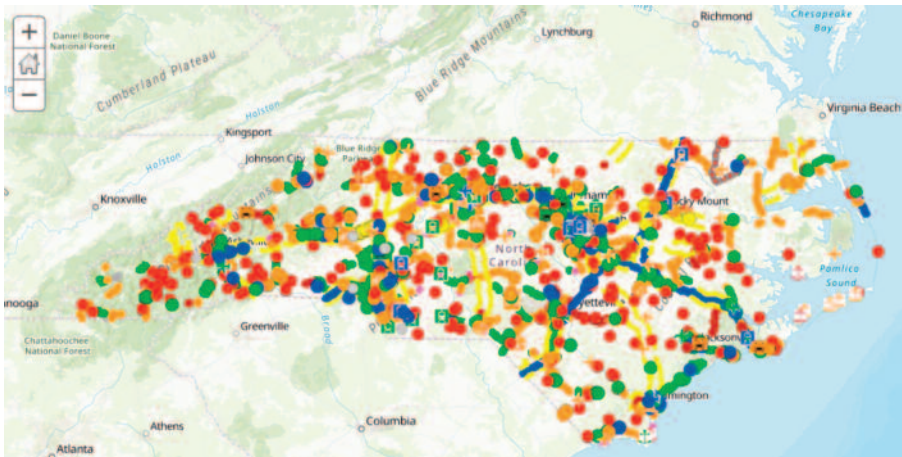


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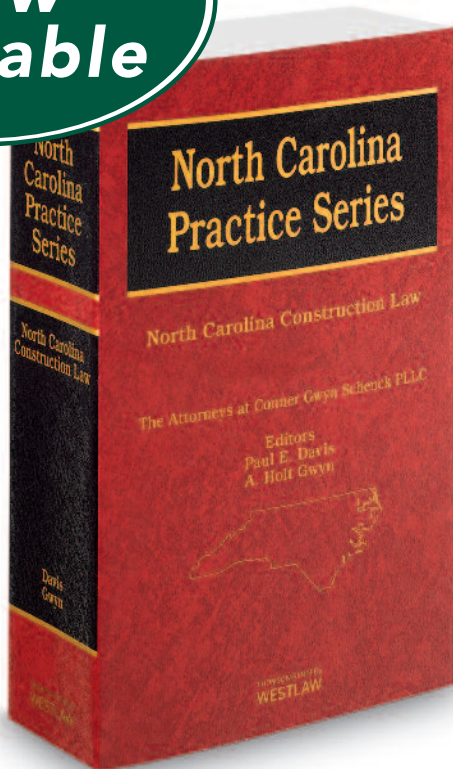


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By Conner Gwyn Schenck PLLC

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