

Holiday Resort renovations draw on vision of administrator

Whether the project is new construction, an addition, or renovation to an existing facility, Fuqua Construction staff believe the same standards of good planning, careful attention to detail and quality construction should apply. A recent renovation project at Holiday Resort and Estates in Emporia illustrates how that philosophy can impact a project, regardless of size.

"The experience from beginning to end has been an almost flawless process," Mike Kerbs, Holiday Resort administrator said reflecting on the project, which was still in progress in late March. "Everything is going really well."

Kerbs had his doubts that the renovation process would be a positive experience when the facility board and staff began planning in 2007. But, with completion scheduled for mid-May, he has found the design-build project, which pairs Fuqua Construction of Inman with architect Kelly McMurphy of Landmark Architects of Hutchinson, to be far surpassing his expectations. The partnership with the design-build team was actually Kerbs second attempt at developing a facility renovation plan. The first effort was with the once widely used competitive bid method through a different design firm.

"We started like most people do," Kerbs said. "We set up a retainer amount with an architect and the first plans came in at about 90 percent above what we were expecting. I mentioned a few things that weren't included that hadn't been



Mike Kerbs is available as a reference on Fuqua Construction's work at 620-343-9285



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-- Mike Kerbs, Holiday Resort administrator

communicated well, and when that was added (the budget) was way above what I thought it would be."

After receiving that initial estimate, the project was put on hold while the staff considered options. It was at that time that Kerbs first learned about the design-build model in conversation with Fuqua Construction staff. A design-build project brings owner, contractor and architect together in a team approach during the project planning, providing coordination of design and construction, keeping surprises to a minimum.

It often results in smoother scheduling of subcontractors, better understanding of the project by all involved and savings for the owner in the overall project budget.

The difference in approach was immediately apparent, Kerbs said, adding that he had found it to be a very productive way to work.

According to Kerbs, the Fuqua Construction team put him at ease as they discussed his vision of the project, and he felt his opinions were welcomed as critiques were done of a series of preliminary sketches. The back-and-forth process continued until Kerbs and Fuqua were both comfortable that they had a preliminary design that met Kerbs' needs, fulfilled necessary regulatory requirements and fit the facility's budget.

The end result was not the facility addition that had been originally considered, but an affordable project that improves the existing facility by enclosing a large living room area and renovating a conference room, quiet room, two day rooms, therapy room and the front entrance and reception area.

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"I had just a general idea in my head and (Max) could transfer my thoughts to paper and make it even more workable," Kerbs said, adding it was obvious that Fuqua understood the ultimate goal of the renovations and how it could be achieved.

Fuqua's ability to listen and translate what Kerbs wanted to paper was invaluable during the design process, according to McMurphy, saving the owner both time and money.

"With this particular project, Max and his staff had already done much of the work (when I came on the project), and I was basically doing the final drawings, though Mike (Kerbs) did have me add a little extra when we met. Having a builder early on in the process who's already met with the client and discussed needs and construction costs, helps me so that I don't overdesign and then have to trim back the project," McMurphy said.



This artist rendering shows renovations to the physical therapy room at Holiday Resort.

The fact that Max Fuqua and his construction team specialize in nursing home construction gives additional value to the owner, McMurphy said, because of the expertise and experience they bring to the project. That goes beyond knowledge of requirements demanded by the Department of Aging, Department of Health and Environment and the Fire Marshal. Fuqua and his construction crews understand and can talk the industry lingo when meeting with clients, McMurphy said.

Kerbs appreciated the design-build team's experience when the plans were accepted by regulatory agencies on first submission – something he had not expected. The plans not only looked good on paper, they passed all the requirements, Kerbs commented. Fuqua also was able to give suggestions to enhance accessibility, utilize space and solved several design issues based on his experience with past projects. But, according to Kerbs, the Fuqua Construction team's understanding of nursing homes goes beyond regulatory requirements; they also understand that the facility is not just a construction site, but the residents' home. Kerbs believes that sensitivity has been critical to the project and day-to-day functioning of the facility.



Artist rendering of the front hallway at Holiday Resort after renovations

"We can't just hire in any construction company. If they don't know the (nursing home) industry it just won't work," Kerbs said. "The Fuqua crew members understand that it's the residents' home even while it's undergoing renovations.

The two-man crew assigned to the project have done a good job of containing dust and keeping the job site picked up and safe for residents and staff, but they have done much more than that, according to Kerbs. The men -- described by Kerbs as "two guys and a hammer working like crazy" -- are very respectful of residents and staff and have made an effort to get to know them and the way the facility operates. The crew and supervisor have taken care to coordinate schedules with staff so that disruptions to daily routines are kept to a minimum. That has made a huge difference in how staff and residents deal with the unavoidable mess and inconvenience that can occur.

Working comfortably with facility staff is an attribute the Fuqua crew has consistently shown on other projects, McMurphy said.

"If you have a contractor who doesn't understand nursing homes, then the nursing home staff has to take the time to train the contractors. The first project I worked on with Max was 21 years ago when he was learning the business from his partner, Terry Doerksen. Terry was very good at working with owners – very patient, kept his calm. Max learned from Terry that that is how you do business. I can not speak highly enough of Max and his staff. I wish they would train other contractors. He listens to and works with owners very well," McMurphy said. "Things can come up in renovations with the best of people, but Max has done enough of them that I don't worry about Max."

The Holiday Resort residents are excited about the changes that are going on around them and looking forward to completion of the project, which started construction in February, Kerbs said.

-- Feel free to call Mike Kerbs as a reference on Fuqua Construction's work at 620-343-9285.

written by Cindy Baldwin, Baldwin Creative Services