

US BUILDERS REVIEW

THE MAGAZINE FOR LEADING CONSTRUCTION EXECUTIVES





KNOLLMeyer
BUILDING CORP





Boston builders make a mark on their city

Produced by Ian Nichols and Written by Christine Fisher

When Chris Knollmeyer drives around Boston and the surrounding towns, he can point to buildings he’s helped build or maintain. There’s the iconic Custom House in Boston’s financial district, historic condos in Boston’s Back Bay, Betty Power Public Library in the city’s Roxbury neighborhood, the roof on Harvard University’s Gund Hall.

After a lifetime in the construction industry and 26 years owning his own general contracting firm, Knollmeyer Building Corp (KBC), Knollmeyer has certainly had an impact on the greater Boston area.

“His thumbprint is all over the place,” says Shawn Vetere, KBC’s director of marketing and business development.

And Knollmeyer, who also owns Greylock Roofing, shows no signs of slowing down.

An early start in the building industry

Knollmeyer caught the construction bug when he was 12 years old and started working with a company down the street from his home. By 18, he was hooked and pursuing a civil engineering degree. After a few years with an engineering firm and a few more with a construction firm, Knollmeyer set out on his own, launching KBC in 1991.

KBC is a Wilmington, Massachusetts-based general contractor.

“We’re builders,” Vetere says. “That’s what we do. We’re known as an outside envelope specialist, but a lot of times when there’s outside envelope issues, there’s damage inside, so we’re doing interiors as well.”



The virtues of versatility

KBC embraces historic renovation, new construction and everything in between.

The company has contributed to Boston's most iconic historic buildings, including the Marriott Custom House, which was built in the early 1900s and, standing 496-feet tall, was once the city's tallest building. There, KBC repaired windows and band course flashings, repointed brick and repaired masonry on the pyramid and observation deck, a million-dollar construction contract.

KBC "goes way back" with notable Boston-based clients like Harvard University, Vetere says. In one more recent project, KBC was hired by the Harvard University School of Design to install a 25,000-square-foot roof membrane, as well as plaza and fiberglass truss covers. That \$3.8 million contract also included interior plumbing, electrical, insulation and ceiling installation.

In other instances, KBC might replace lintels—the horizontal supports made of timber, stone, concrete or steel across the top of doors and windows—replace siding and windows, and update interior and exterior finishes.

A Boston company through and through, it lends a hand in times of need, too. After an accident in which a firetruck lost control and careened into the Betty Power Public Library, KBC reconstructed the interior, updated the glass façade and installed a series of masonry impact walls to minimize damage should a similar incident happen in the future.




DRISCOLL
INSURANCE & BONDS

STRENGTH. COMMITMENT. EXPERIENCE.
Jay Driscoll
93 Longwater Circle • Norwell, MA 02061
781.421.2400 • www.driscollagency.com

*From restoring
100-year-old
masonry to
updating glass
façades and
renovating
modern interiors,
after 26 years,
Knollmeyer
Building Corp
does it all.*

Raising the roof

In 2001, Knollmeyer saw an opportunity to grow the business. As an exterior envelope expert, KBC had completed several roof repair and replacement projects, so he decided to launch Greylock Roofing as a way to brand that service.

The two companies often work hand-in-hand.

For instance, the American Red Cross hired KBC to replace its roof, perform repairs to the underlying gypsum deck, install a vapor barrier system, add insulation, install density board and replace skylights. KBC enlisted Greylock Roofing as a subcontractor on that \$3.2 million contract, and as that work took place during Boston's snowiest winter to-date, at times the two companies had as many as 100 employees on the roof, working just to clear massive amounts of snow.

There seems to be no shortage of roof work, Vetere says, noting with a chuckle that he doesn't have to look for roof work. It comes to him.

"There are plenty of people that need roof work," he says.





A repeat customer sweet spot

After 26 years in business, KBC has established a network of both repeat clients and business partners.

“We work closely with some of the top architects and engineers in the area to provide some of the highest quality construction services available,” Vetere says.

In-house, Knollmeyer, Vetere and their estimator, Joe Deveau, have decades of industry experience. Thanks to Deveau, in particular, the estimating department is fair and accurate, Vetere says.

“There are a lot of firms out there that will low ball the customer and the project and make up for it later on with change orders,” he says. “That’s not the Knollmeyer way of doing business. Our numbers are true and accurate numbers.”

That integrity pays for itself in the form of repeat business. At times, Knollmeyer has said 90 percent of KBC’s customers are repeat customers.

Those who stick around appreciate KBC’s attentiveness. The company invests the time and resources necessary to visit job sites regularly, and it keeps lines of communication open, even when there’s no work on the table.

“During the week I’ll pop into random offices of people we do business with,” Vetere says. “I might bring them cannoli from the North End, or some Italian bakery pizza. I do things like that, say hello. It’s nice to do that for the client. They like that.”

Gestures like those ensure KBC’s next 26 years will be just as sweet as its last. •



KNOLLMAYERBUILDINGCORP.COM