

Universal Flooring busy in multi-markets, primed to exceed 2010 work volume

by Michelle Leach

Universal Flooring's projects read like a Metro "Who's Who" — from Midtown Crossing at Turner Park and TD Ameritrade Park, to Kutak Rock's HQ, the Kroc Center and Bellevue Medical Center.

The Omaha-based firm, which provides flooring products, installation and consultation, has long taken on notable projects, including the Holland Center, Mid-America Center and Ameristar Casino — and its volume of projects is also notable, as it's on-track to easily outpace last year's total even as the business was largely untouched by the recession.

"During the downturn — if we had one; Omaha didn't have much of one — we did a lot of health care and assisted living, and education and multi-family," said President Tim Flynn.

Some of the activity in these sectors for the business at 17801 Storage Road was a direct result, however, of broader economic changes; multi-family, he indicated, got big as mortgage lending came under stricter scrutiny during the financial crisis.

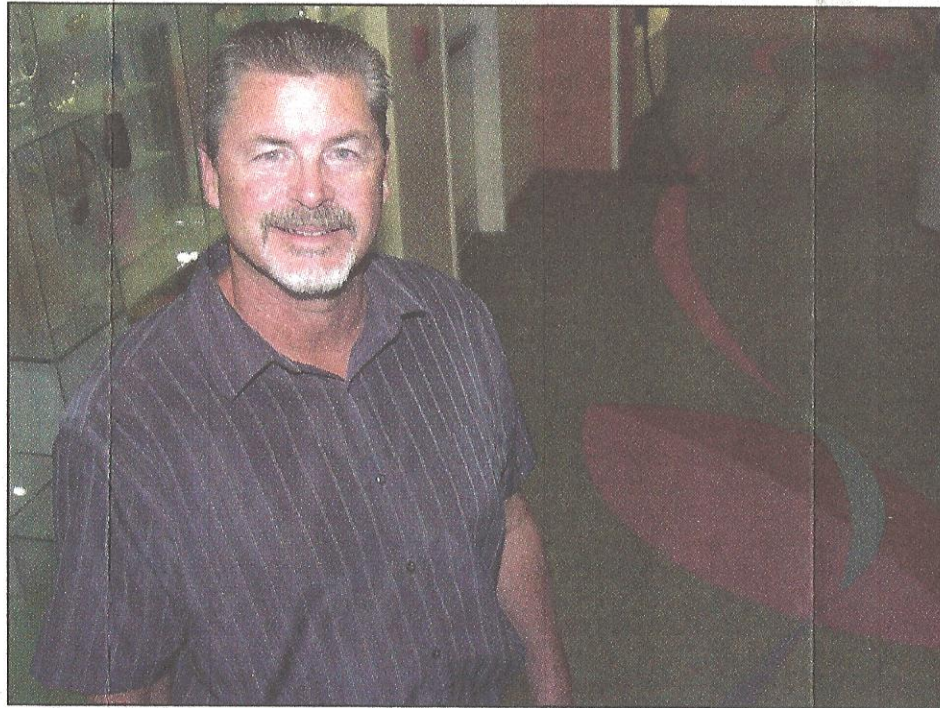
In all, Flynn referred to the difficulty of listing a few top projects when the firm takes on 300 to 400 annually.

"Through July we wrote up about 240 jobs," he said. "And they range from 100 bucks to half a million dollars."

Some, like Midtown Crossing, are major anomalies valued even higher than a half-million.

At this time last year, Universal Flooring had written up 218 jobs and ended the year at 375 projects.

The commercial floor covering contractor, which got its start in 1989, has also been



President Tim Flynn in the Specialty Pediatrics Center at Children's Hospital & Medical Center ... Health care represents one of four sectors resulting in work opportunities for commercial floor covering contractor.

busy in the last few years in the religious market — with work at Dundee Presbyterian among the more memorable projects.

Fittingly, Flynn noted that they have also undertaken substantial work with faith-based schools, including Duchesne's art and science center.

Aside from active sectors, specific types of products have gained momentum, according to Flynn.

"Something new we got into in the last two years has been concrete polishing," he

said, indicating this as an alternative to vinyl tile. "The concrete is ground to a high-gloss finish, which doesn't need waxes or coatings.

"Future maintenance costs are greatly reduced and people like the look," Flynn said.

He noted this product has been particularly popular in restaurants, and can be found at many Goodwill Industries locations (another significant client of theirs, according to Flynn).

Universal Flooring's team of around 35 has had a hand in projects throughout

the metro, including in North Downtown just as the area was being fashioned into a destination.

Flynn said, going back, its team has worked on the Slowdown and Film Streams more recently, it has had a hand in the ball

Universal Flooring

Address: 17801 Storage Road, Omaha, NE 68136

Phone: 333-4495

Founded: 1989

Employees: around 35

Services: flooring (including tile, resilient, carpeting, wood, specialty) interior assessments, installation, interior vitalization (protection, maximize lifespan of product)

Website: www.universalflooring.net

park, the Hilton and restaurants like Nost Wine Lounge.

Across the river, going back, the firm did substantial casino work and has also been involved with downtown revitalization projects including the transformation of the International Harvester building into artists' lofts, and the Hughes-Irons building renovation.

"They're trying to turn it into more of an Old Market area," Flynn said of city efforts.

When asked about sustainable trends Flynn said they always try to recycle carpet but said that there hasn't been a particular demand from clients or any one sector or type of project for "green" products. If anything

Continued on page 4

Midlands Business Journal
Established in 1975

ADMINISTRATION

Universal Flooring remains busy in multi-markets

Continued from page 2.

he said it's the manufacturers that are driving these changes.

"A lot of carpet people have come up with new and better backings that are recyclable and using manufacturing processes that are not as hazardous to the environment as they used to be," he said.

Cork and linoleum is in demand, but not as much as wood — particularly in the multi-family environment.

Universal Flooring has also contributed to LEED-certified buildings, including the state's first — the National Parks Services' Midwest regional headquarters on the riverfront.

When it comes to renovations, Flynn said the historic Paxton and Kutak Rock's HQ stand out as memorable, while Children's Hospital additions and another mixed-use space, Aksarben Village, represent other noteworthy undertakings in recent years.