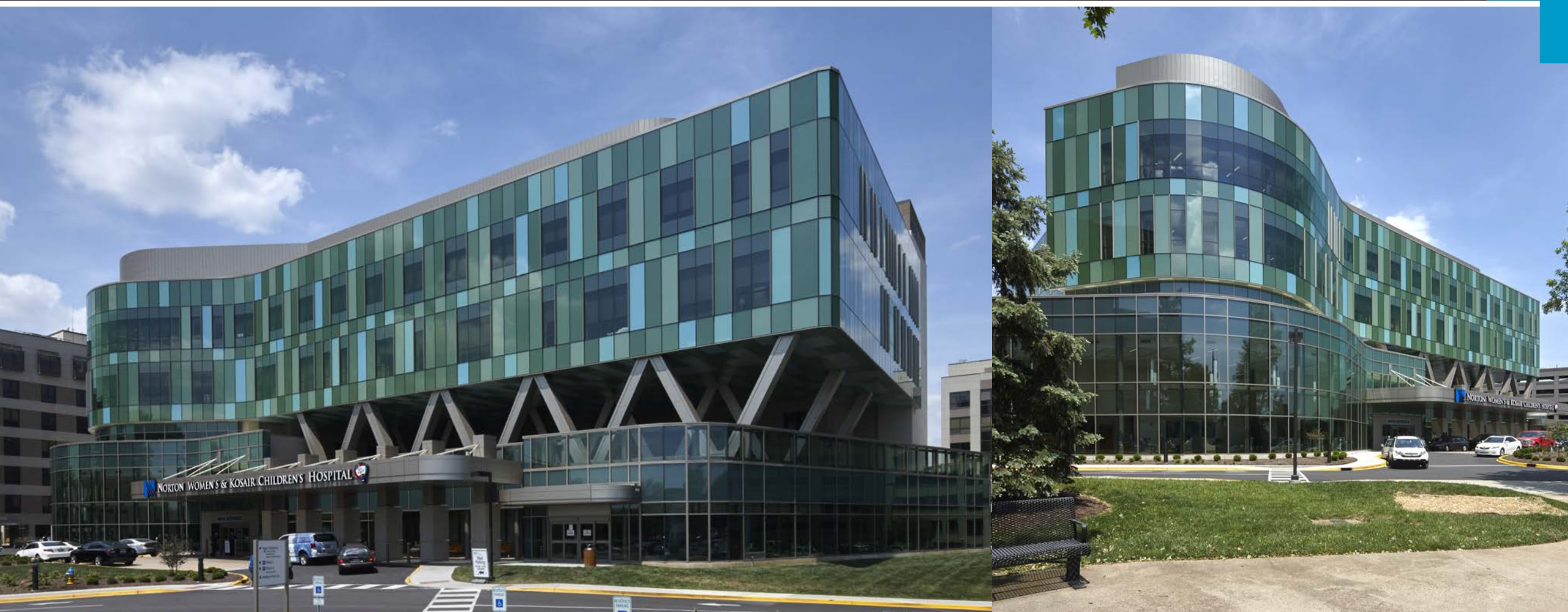


UNITIZED CURTAIN WALL "A REAL EYE-OPENER" CASE STUDY

NORTON WOMEN'S AND
KOSAIR CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL
LOUISVILLE, KY





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- Jay Akins, President, Akins Company

+ PROJECT SNAPSHOT

Architect

HKS, Dallas, TX
Laughlin Millea Hillman Architecture LLC (LMH)

General Contractor

Wehr Constructors, Inc.

Dealer / Installer

Jay Akins, Akins Company

Window Design Consultation

Graham Architectural Products, Curtain Wall Solutions

Product

Custom unitized 4-sided butt-glazed curtain wall and standard prefabricated and assembled curtain wall systems

Assignment

Provide 52,000+ SF of pre-glazed unitized curtain wall and fabricated/assembled unglazed pressure bar curtain wall for a 373-bed hospital at the center of a \$117.8 million construction project.

+ CHALLENGE

Norton Suburban Hospital was already behind schedule on a major construction project designed to enhance the hospital’s ability to meet the special needs of women and children. Originally planned as stick-built and field-glazed, the tight timeline and a compelling pitch from Jay Akins, of Akins Company, and Graham Architectural Products (GAP) regarding GAP’s pre-glazed unitized system caused the owner and architects to rethink that approach. The only potential issue? Jay’s company had never installed unitized curtain wall.

+ FIRST TIME IS A CHARM

When Jay Akins first approached Graham Architectural Products (GAP) about the ambitious Norton Women’s and Kosair Children’s Hospital construction project, one thing was clear: The schedule didn’t allow a lot of time between the release of the job and dry-in.

Akins, president of Akins Company, knew he was bidding against stick-built systems which would require field-glazing and the time-consuming steel erection. That approach didn’t seem to fit into the severely compressed timeline.

After huddling on several occasions with GAP personnel, Akins countered with a pre-glazed, unitized curtain wall system.

A unitized curtain wall enables the contractor to lift, place and anchor completely assembled and glazed panels, allowing you to accomplish in days what would take months with a stick-built approach.

Even though this would mark Akins’ first venture into bidding and installing a unitized wall system, and even though the project would require more than 52,000 SF of curtain wall, he was eager to proceed.

“I’ve been trying to sell a unitized job in this town (Louisville, KY) for years,” he said, “but I just couldn’t get people to understand that, yeah, while overall it’s more expensive than a conventional curtain wall, the owner and the contractor make it up five times on the tail end by how quickly you can close the building in.”

This job, Akins said, “was very schedule driven, so I just told them to interview me last. Then I brought my team in – and my competition didn’t do that. We had a mock-up, too. And I sold the job because I could do the job and meet the schedule.”

Akins said Graham worked diligently to prepare his team, talking about scope, what was needed and what would be provided, how the job would be handled, and how the schedule would unfold. Then he did a lot of the selling.

Since the Akins-GAP proposal was bid as an alternative to the specifications, the architect was not immediately on board with the change. The architect and the owner liked the system and the schedule, particularly the accelerated completion date. A trip to a Wisconsin testing facility proved to everyone the unitized panels were up to the task.

Although Akins has a seasoned staff of versatile workers, GAP personnel made sure installation went smoothly, meeting with Akins and Paul O’Grady, Akins’ vice president and general manager, prior to installation. “A lot of the collaboration was up front,” said a GAP spokesperson. “Figuring out how the schedule would work, what he needed, providing details, showing him videos, talking about installation ... all that fun stuff, that’s what made it work ...”

Then on the day Akins Company began setting the first panels, Graham Curtain Wall Solutions had its engineering manager and project manager on site, providing training in the field to help make sure the installation went smoothly.

As panels were installed and portions of the building were dried in, interior work ensued immediately – dry wall was hung, wires were run, and HVAC equipment was installed.

Eventually, the hospital was able to open some of the patient rooms in the back side of the building before the front of the building was even complete.

Because this was Louisville’s first unitized job, area architects could often be seen on-site monitoring the project’s rapid progress. “It was a real eye-opener,” Akins said.

The project wrapped up in December, 2014, and, Akins said, “The construction manager and the owner just loved it...how fast we went...how good it looks...how smooth everything went. They were really glad that we were on the job.”

And Akins is glad GAP was right there beside him. “The word on this project with us and Graham was ‘team.’ I’m a pretty demanding person and I’m passionate about putting out a good product and doing a good job.

“It was my first project with Graham and it was a very schedule-driven project, but they just exceeded all my expectations. From bid day to submittals to material on site, I was really blown away at how quick they were. It was pretty amazing.

“I’d love to do another one with them.”