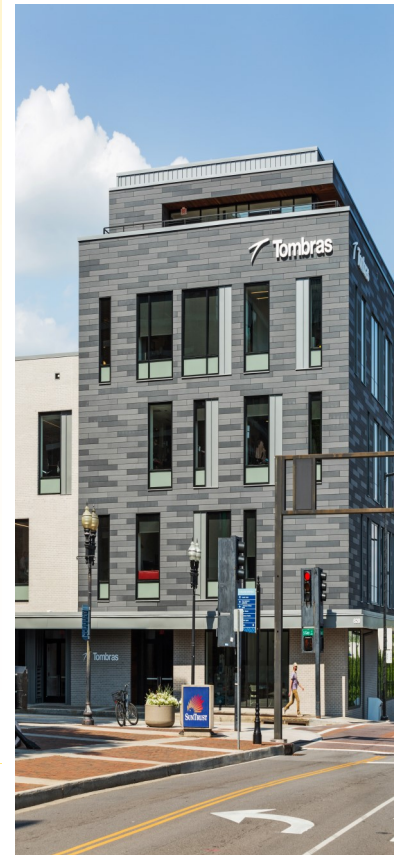


Project Narrative

New Headquarters for The Tombras Group

When Charlie Tombras, owner of The Tombras Group, would bring new clients to Knoxville, he would purposefully avoid bringing them to the downtown area. But in early 2016 when their existing building was lacking the space for their current growth, he made the decision to purchase the vacant Knoxville Utilities Board building. The building had been sitting empty for over ten years and sits at the busy intersection of Church and Gay Street in downtown Knoxville. While the over 50,000 square foot building had plenty of room for corporate office and creative space, the decline of the building and the multiple renovations over more than 90 years with multiple construction types and 3 different buildings certainly had its challenges.

The first challenge proved to be the central location at one of the busiest intersections in downtown Knoxville. With the recent resurgence of businesses and residences moving to the downtown area, real estate and moreover the area around that real estate is at a prime. The general contractor was only able to secure one lane on Gay Street and a partial lane on Church Street to close off for access. Imagine trying to schedule the stocking of over 150,000 square feet of sheetrock and plywood and 12,000 square feet of exterior fiber cement panels and sub girts on an as needed basis with no lay down area or room for additional material! Each delivery was scheduled per elevation or interior area, was scheduled to begin either before 6:30am or after 5:00 pm, and was carefully orchestrated to be able to use the mast climber scaffolds to stock above the basement and first floor. However, more often than not all material had to be hand carried into the building.





Building Construction Challenges

The second challenge faced during construction was the fact that the building had been vacant for over 10 years and had gone through at least 4 alterations over its 90 year history. Although they had tried to incorporate multiple types of construction, it left different clusters of columns throughout and various historical features that both the design team and owner wanted to maintain. The exterior façade as shown in

this picture was completely demolished down to the concrete floor and The Wakefield Corporation constructed new exterior walls using light gauge metal studs and exterior sheathing to provide the main structure for the Oko Skin fiber cement metal slat system and rain screed system. This panel system, manufactured in Germany and shipped from Canada was the first of its type to be used in Knoxville.

“It’s kind of a Frankenstein sort of structure,” states John Sanders, architect with the Sanders Pace firm who has been working with Tombras for over 10 years.

Okoskin Panels

The Okoskin panels used on the Tombras Group Headquarters are an exterior concrete cladding attached to a sub girt rain screed system with screws that are visible. Each panel had to be predrilled to line up with the panels above and below it. To make this even more difficult, the panels had 3 different textures and no 2 panels with the same texture could be next to each other on any side. This required an extensive layout process.

Weather Challenges

Because schedule was of the utmost importance, as it is in most projects, getting started and pushing the project is something The Wakefield Corporation is used to. To assist Johnson & Galyon in the fast track nature of the project, we were heavily involved in determining a way to begin hanging sheetrock before the windows were installed. This included using mold and mildew resistant sheetrock on most walls, not just priority walls and constructing panels from the inside of the building to protect it from the elements so we could continue the exterior façade and work as efficiently as possible inside the building as well. What made this especially challenging was that we were performing most of this work during the extremely wet and cold months of November, December, and January.



View of the penthouse area atop the Tombras Group Headquarters

Scheduling and time line challenges

If beginning construction in the latter part of the year isn't enough, the Tombras Group was on a strict timeline due to the fact that they had already sold their building and had already set the move in date with the new occupant of that building. Because of this, the Architect was also under pressure to complete the drawings and have their clients in on time. Mid-construction the design team and owners decided to build out the smaller 3 story structure attached on the north side of the building which had originally been left for future buildout. However, this did not extend the schedule at all, only created the need for added workers, extended hours and creativity as to how to add more materials and people into an already crowded and tight space. As the approaching completion date loomed closer, the need for overtime and weekend work was obvious. For more than 8 weeks our entire crew of 20-30 men worked a minimum of 48 to 56 hours a week to ensure that the owners moved into their building on time.

From Mid-mod to Open

In its last renovation the "KUB" building would be classified as mid-modern. With its green glazed exterior and narrow windows, the design team wanted to open the building up and allow as much natural light in as possible and create that urban downtown feeling.

The 54,000 square foot interior design features a 2 story entry lobby from the Gay Street entrance and a separate 2 story production studio in the central part of the building. Open office space at the exterior of the building allow for plenty of natural light from the new curtain wall window system.

The building design also included extensive outdoor space on the roof of the building with the penthouse kitchen area. There are 2 outdoor patios on the roof with green space and a new green screen to replace the always visible mechanical screen that used to occupy the roof area.

Dedicated to Excellence

The Wakefield Corporation was founded in 1986 by Jim Wakefield based on this one principle. Just as the construction industry has evolved over the last THREE decades, so has The Wakefield Corporation (TWC). We are no longer just a drywall company, from metal stud framing, acoustical ceilings, and exterior façade installation, TWC can handle any size project that might arise.

Why is The Tombras Group Headquarters Special?

The Tombras Group Headquarters is different, special, and deserving of this award not only for the reasons given here, but also because it is helping renew and revitalize a downtown area that has so much potential.

While maintaining certain historical features, incorporating the public and downtown residential dwellers with a soon to be open Tombras-themed coffee shop, all while utilizing materials never used in the Knoxville market.

Tombras, Sanders Pace, Johnson & Galyon, The Wakefield Corporation and all of the construction team have taken what was once an eyesore and renovated it into a “premier work space in what is now a vibrant downtown.” (John Sanders, architect)

