

# REPUTATION

## IS EVERYTHING

*Johnson Wilson Constructors Builds a Long List of Satisfied (and Repeat) Customers*



BY HOLLY KELSEY-HENRY

**M**ost successful organizations have well-thought-out core values and mission statements. Johnson Wilson Constructors has a long list of such values to which it holds itself accountable. But this incredibly prosperous business adds something unusual to the mix: fun.

"We enjoy what we do," said Executive Director Fred Strom. "And we always inform our clients that a fun factor will exist while we work together in the project development and construction process. Throughout the years, our principals remain involved with all of our major projects to assure construction is completed to the full satisfaction of our clients, always building on our reputation as a quality, fair commercial general contractor. And we always remember to have fun along the way."

The team also believes in dealing ethically with customers, employees, subcontractors and suppliers, using ingenuity to conserve a client's resources, getting results everyone can be proud of, keeping its promises, relishing their vocation and maintaining a sense of humor.

***"We always remember to have fun along the way."***

— EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FRED STROM

When it comes to Johnson Wilson Constructors, these are solid and genuine core values – and thus the company has a reputation for success that has grown throughout its long and steady history.

Whether a client wants to design and build a \$30 million manufacturing facility or needs a general contractor on a \$1 million commercial expansion project, Johnson Wilson gets the job done and delivers on every promise the company makes—from the quality of craftsmanship to the budget and timeline.

Indeed, because most of the company's business is carried out within a small radius of Duluth, word-of-mouth and reputation are everything.

"Our reputation as a quality constructor is extremely important and our most valuable asset," Strom said. "Many of the projects we construct annually are with clients for whom we have worked previously. Also, over the years we have developed regional clients. For these clients, we sometimes travel outside our normal trade area, but normally we stay within Wisconsin and Minnesota. We value all our clients and know our reputation is everything."





From left: Executive Director Fred Strom, President Shane Johnson, Vice President Dean Johnson and Chairman Ron Johnson.



Left: Acme Tools. Above: Essentia Health - Lakeside Clinic.

Page 25: Fitgers Brewhouse, The Inn on Lake Superior, Culver's Restaurant.  
PHOTOS COURTESY OF JOHNSON WILSON CONSTRUCTORS.



until 1992, when Strom came onboard as an owner. Together they changed the name to its present moniker and focused on building the company through increased marketing and by continuing its excellent reputation with commercial construction clients in Northern Minnesota and Wisconsin. The partners, Strom noted, are also best friends. "We have had, over the past 23 years, a very successful business and a rewarding personal experience," he said.

Later, Johnson's sons, Dean and Shane, joined the company as owners. As vice-president and president, respectively, they continue the philosophy of building the company's flawless credibility. "We deal honestly and ethically with customers, employees, subcontractors and suppliers," Shane said.

He noted that Johnson Wilson is skilled at (and has been a single source provider of) comprehensive project development and pre-construction services for many clients through the years. "We assist them with initial project concept planning, feasibility, site selection, zoning, permitting and the selection of design professionals for all types of building projects," he said. "Our professional staff assists with constructability analysis, budget preparations, cost estimating and scheduling. Our project

construction superintendents, supported by a full staff of project managers, cost estimators and administrators.

"We have earned a reputation for completing projects on time or ahead of schedule and within or below budget—and always built exactly as specified," noted Chairman Ron Johnson. "You can trust that everything we promise will be delivered. Our business philosophy over the past 44 years has earned rewards. Johnson Wilson has become a high-volume commercial general contractor and construction manager with a great reputation."

Johnson Wilson Constructors, originally named Johnson Wilson Builders, was established by Ron Johnson and his brother-in-law, Bill Wilson, in 1971. Wilson passed away in 1983 and Ron Johnson continued running the company

## "We have a long-standing relationship with them for a reason."

— EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RICK KLUN, CENTER CITY HOUSING CORP.

And that reputation, it seems, is stellar. According to Rick Klun, Center City Housing Corp.'s executive director, Johnson Wilson delivers above and beyond its promises. "We have a long-standing relationship with them for a reason," he said. "We've worked with them on a number of buildings and it is a very productive, positive experience."

Located in Duluth, Johnson Wilson Constructors has more than 44 years of building experience in the surrounding areas. The contractor employs an impressive 124 skilled union tradespeople and



development services help our clients create projects which perform to their financial requirements."

One such client is IKONICS Corp., the Duluth-based industrial automation software developer. Executive Vice President Claude Piguet said IKONICS has depended on Johnson Wilson's expertise since beginning a relationship with them in 2009. That's when Johnson Wilson helped establish a 35,000-square-foot facility in Morgan Park as IKONICS expanded.

"They are outstanding," Piguet said. "Consequently, we continue to work with them and we are working with them again as we speak."

## "We have earned a reputation for completing projects on time or ahead of schedule."

— CHAIRMAN RON JOHNSON

Moline Machinery President Gary Moline concurred. Johnson Wilson built the company's state-of-the-art, 32,500-square-foot fabrication and assembly plant. "We've been through building and expansions with them and they are great to work with," he said. "I make a phone call and Shane is in my office within a couple of hours. It is service like that that sets Johnson Wilson apart. It's hard to get that level of customer service."



LEED Accredited Professional Travis Johnson administers the green/sustainable building program.



It's not just the company's high standards of customer service that set it apart. According to Vice President Dean Johnson, the company is also committed to assisting owners in constructing buildings that are environmentally efficient.

"We have completed many Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design [LEED] certified building projects," he said. "We have LEED accredited personnel who administer our green/sustainable building program. We take pride in constructing with a sense of responsibility for our environment, while delivering our clients sustainable structures with the highest level of economic performance."

Johnson Wilson Constructors is, in fact, an all-inclusive design/build contractor. A client can count on the firm for all aspects of a project and Johnson Wilson will assume all liability — from concept to completion. Just as importantly, this model allows for ongoing value engineering and tight control over budgets and timelines.

"Because of our excellent relationships in the development, design and construction industries, we have the best resources to lead the design/build team," Ron Johnson said. "Our range of contracting services takes you from the ground up, including site selection, permits, soil investigation, site development and preparation, laying the





North Shore Bank - Lakeside  
PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHNSON WILSON CONSTRUCTORS.

foundation and building the facility all the way through the final landscaping. You can hold one company accountable for all of the work done on your project: Johnson Wilson.”

One of the projects the company is most proud of was construction of the Northland Country Club clubhouse in 2007. The building was completed in just nine months – an effort, Shane Johnson noted, that “required the employees to go above and beyond the call of duty, working overtime to finish the project early.”

***“Our project development services help our clients create projects which perform to their financial requirements.”***

– PRESIDENT SHANE JOHNSON

Other examples of Johnson Wilson’s accomplishments include the \$13.8 million Matterhorn Apartments, the \$11.8 million University of Minnesota Duluth Life Science Building, the \$3.9 million Hermantown Administration Building, the \$7.9 million Village Place Apartments, the \$2.4 million Solvay Hospice House and the \$13.4 million Edgewater Hotel addition and waterpark. The company also built Zenith Management Co.’s flagship hotel, The Inn on Lake Superior, in Canal Park.

Through the years, Johnson Wilson has tackled retail/office space, housing projects, education and government buildings, health-care facilities, financial institutions and hospitality projects.

The company specializes in a variety of construction areas, including:



Great Lakes Aquarium  
PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHNSON WILSON CONSTRUCTORS.



Lincoln Park Center  
PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHNSON WILSON CONSTRUCTORS.

#### General Construction

Johnson Wilson Constructors provides high quality general construction services, specializing in industrial and commercial projects. The experience it demonstrates in the marketplace through project managers and field superintendents is unparalleled. According to Strom, the company’s reputation rides on the skills of people who uphold its stringent standards for on-time performance, cost control and quality craftsmanship.

#### Construction Management

When hired to provide construction management, Johnson Wilson Constructors’ efforts are concentrated on a timely and economical delivery of a top-quality project. Using business and

management skills, as well as knowledge of general contracting practices, the company develops cost estimates and budgets, schedules for design and construction and a system for planning, organizing and monitoring the construction progress. In many instances, the company is brought into the project early on and it participates in reviewing and making recommendations for the project’s initial development and design. This pre-construction work allows the company to better integrate the design and construction phases of a project and smoothly facilitate the transition from one phase to the next. “Our goal is to exceed expectations and we strive to do this at every point during the construction process,” Strom said.



Little Store/Subway  
PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHNSON WILSON CONSTRUCTORS.

#### Project Development

For the past 44 years, Johnson Wilson Constructors has been a single-source provider of comprehensive pre-construction feasibility, planning, design review, zoning, permitting and development services for virtually all types of commercial, assisted living, multi-family and retail projects. The company has diversified team experience in providing all aspects of a project from start to finish. Its wide experience and design-build methods provide added value to its clients in producing high quality, successful projects.

***“They are outstanding.”***

– EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT  
CLAUDE PIGUET, IKONICS CORP.

#### Metal Buildings

Johnson Wilson Constructors has a long history of representing and constructing quality Butler® pre-engineered metal buildings. Whether a project is a commercial retail center, an office/warehouse facility or community recreation center, there is a Butler® building that will fit any client’s requirements.

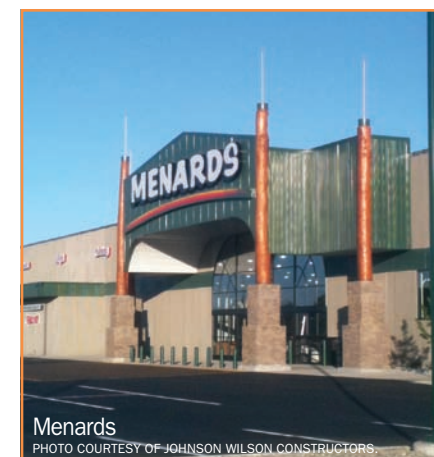
During the past 100 years, Butler® Manufacturing has become a worldwide leader in building systems design and construction. Because the structural systems,



Ikonics Warehouse  
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CPA Barb Schlichting  
is the company’s  
controller.



Menards  
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Moline  
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Matterhorn Ridge Condos  
PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHNSON WILSON CONSTRUCTORS.





Proctor High School  
PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHNSON WILSON CONSTRUCTORS.

buildings with the highest level of economic performance.

Johnson Wilson has successfully completed several LEED certified building projects and has LEED Accredited Professionals on staff.

#### Historical Renovations

Johnson Wilson Constructors believes historic restoration is a unique area of construction that requires a creative, innovative, skilled general contractor sensitive to the accurate reconstruction and preservation requirements of the project. Each historic or adaptive reuse project provides opportunities to revive and save aging buildings with significant historic value. The company's interaction with historic preservation agencies, strict compliance with the architectural design and adherence to critical preservation construction details ensures owners that any applicable historic tax credits are earned.

#### Green Building

Johnson Wilson Constructors is committed to assisting owners in producing buildings that are environmentally responsible. The company understands that green building is more than a style of construction. It means constructing with a sense of responsibility for the environment, while delivering clients sustainable

***"I make a phone call and Shane is in my office ... It's hard to get that level of customer service."***

— PRESIDENT GARY MOLINE,  
MOLINE MACHINERY

roof and walls of a Butler® building are engineered to work in tandem with one another, the customer's construction schedule and budget can be reduced considerably when compared to ordinary construction methods.

***"We have LEED accredited personnel who administer our green/sustainable building program."***

— VICE PRESIDENT DEAN JOHNSON



UMD Life Sciences Building  
PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHNSON WILSON CONSTRUCTORS.



WesternBank, Central Avenue.  
PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHNSON WILSON CONSTRUCTORS.



Nevada Bob's  
PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHNSON WILSON CONSTRUCTORS.

"To assist owners in their historic renovation projects, we provide consulting and assistance in the historic tax credit application process to ensure the available tax credits are obtained," Strom said. "Again, we see the entire project through with professionalism and attention to detail. We are all extremely proud of what we do and that makes a huge difference in the end project."

For more information on Johnson Wilson Constructors, visit [johnsonwilson.com](http://johnsonwilson.com).

► Holly Kelsey-Henry is a freelance writer based in Northwest Wisconsin.



UMD Kirby Student Center  
PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHNSON WILSON CONSTRUCTORS.



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