



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
January 27, 2009

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## **RBC Plaza a Monument to Collaborative Construction**

Standing statuesquely in the heart of downtown Raleigh, North Carolina, the new RBC Plaza building—the region’s tallest structure at 33 stories and 538 feet high—was envisioned as a symbol of the growth and growth potential of Raleigh and the Triangle.

For Hardin Construction Company, the general contractor, the project was an opportunity to help define the city’s skyline, as Hardin had done for cities throughout the southeast.

“As the first true high-rise, mixed-use project in downtown Raleigh and a key to the revitalization and transformation of the downtown area, RBC Plaza was understood to be a marquee project for our client and the community,” said Hardin Vice President Tom Booth, who heads up Hardin’s Raleigh office. “And even though Hardin had delivered more than 60 projects in North Carolina, clearly this one had special significance.”

What today stands as a sentinel of civic pride and vitality is, for Hardin and the construction team, also a symbol of superior planning and teamwork.

## **No room to spare**

Each construction project is unique. What's striking about the RBC Plaza project is the mixed bag of challenges it presented—from an incredibly constricted jobsite to historic drought conditions—and the creative responses used to overcome them.

“From the very beginning, we understood that site logistics would be one of our toughest challenges; it was our number-one concern,” recalled Hardin General Superintendent Dean Killen. “As it turned out, it was more challenging than we imagined and remained an overriding consideration throughout the 22 months of construction.”

The construction team inherited a compact .83-acre parcel at the confluence of three of the city's busiest thoroughfares—Fayetteville, Martin and Wilmington streets. Moreover, the building's footprint extended to the street or sidewalk on three sides, and was closely bordered on the fourth side by a high-rise.

The team had hoped for the closing of two traffic lanes to provide a laydown area for storage, deliveries and loading. No such luck. The bustling urban neighborhood surrendered a single parking lane. To compensate, the construction team scheduled nighttime deliveries to avoid disrupting or competing with everyday traffic. Also instituted: just-in-time deliveries, which eliminated the need for on-site storage. “Things were delivered as they were needed, and we immediately had them unloaded and transferred to the areas where they would be used,” said Killen.

Timing was everything. Truckers were assigned down-to-the-minute time slots for making deliveries. Word circulated quickly that tardiness could mean banishment to the back of a waiting line—a new opening might become available next hour, or next day.

With only one crane, one material lift and no staging areas, meticulous scheduling ruled. “If someone needed an hour of crane time or had to use the buck hoist, that time had to be accounted for,” said Killen. Use of the service elevators was, in fact, typically mapped out weeks in advance, right down to individual trips up and down.

The team also formulated a work schedule that would minimally disrupt the area's pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Hoisting restrictions were in effect from 7:00-9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m., and 3:00-5:00 p.m. Using the crane to “fly” concrete formwork, or assembled sections or moulds, between floors of the building was an exacting enterprise. Often the construction team collaborated with city officials to identify five- and 10-minute time blocks when traffic could be temporarily halted to allow for flying materials above the streets. In what essentially became a 24-hour operation, workers' hours were juggled to offset restrictions and keep work flowing.

“Something else we did that was unusual,” Killen remembers, “was pour concrete not in the morning but in the evening, which facilitated early morning deliveries.”

### **Drought, parades and parties**

Nothing inspired invention like the crippling drought that struck the area. Meager rainfall in 2008 prompted city officials to adopt stringent water conservation measures, including prohibiting contractors from using municipal water for pressure testing—required for RBC building's aluminum and glass curtain wall system.

Trucking in water would have been an expensive proposition.

Hardin's solution: a crafty system for capturing and using scarce rainwater. It incorporated two 525-gallon storage tanks, a 1.5-horsepower pump, water hoses—and old-fashioned ingenuity. Workers positioned the tanks to catch rainwater draining from a 23<sup>rd</sup>-floor, open-air deck then tapped the reservoirs as needed.

Not to be overlooked in any downtown construction zone is the possibility of parades, street festivals and other events that attract crowds and require street closures. And so it was with the RBC Plaza project.

“By email, word of mouth, website or meetings, we were in constant communication with the downtown development folks to stay current on planned events,” said Killen. For all parties, the prevailing question was: Here are our plans; how do they affect you?

“Our job was to be cooperative,” said Killen. “We hung a banner on a building for one festival, and for an Armed Forces Appreciation Day we made sure that our tower crane was positioned so it wouldn’t block visibility for people standing at street level.”

Downtown Raleigh Alliance recalled the construction team’s coordination with the Raleigh Police Department to ensure that a street closure would not affect the Raleigh Wide Open festival that celebrates the city’s downtown.

### **Triumph of coordination, communication**

Placement of the 90-foot, 127-ton, steel and glass pyramid and spire atop the tower was itself an event. Site constraints required off-site assembly of most of the top hat’s 42 pieces of pre-cast steel. Eventually, four hulking components were hauled in for erection over a two-day period.

Hardin joined developer Highwoods Properties, architect Cooper Carry, the building’s anchor tenant, RBC Bank, and other project partners in celebrating the topping off.

At the peak of construction, the complex operation involved four sub-projects with four different ownership groups, three separate architectural firms and as many as 400 workers.

The team worked closely with Raleigh city departments in well-orchestrated inspection and permitting processes. Three months prior to the Certificate of Occupancy, Hardin and department representatives—from plumbing and mechanical to land development, fire and electrical—began weekly meetings to anticipate challenges and work through an infinitely detailed turnover schedule.

As each floor of the building was permitted separately for the various components—condos, office, retail, parking, etc., each with separate, often overlapping occupancy turnover dates— the project involved more than 500 permits.

“Those meetings were just invaluable,” Killen recalled. “They may have been some of the project’s most productive meetings. The successful turnover of the building was a true team effort and could not have been done without the cooperation of an amazing City of Raleigh staff.”

Said Curt Willis, Construction Inspection Administrator for the City of Raleigh:

“Hardin’s people were just super to work with. They bent over backward to cooperate with the city to ensure that everything ran smoothly.”

The Triangle Business Journal listed RBC Plaza among its Top 25 Construction Projects, and the building’s signature tower and spire are now iconic features of the downtown skyline.

For the construction team, the building stands as a monument to extraordinary creativity and collaboration.

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Ambient Quotes

“We want to thank you for your company’s commitment, allowing us to deliver the tallest building in Raleigh! Changing the city’s skyline could not have been achieved without the Hardin Construction team.”

— **Excerpt, Letter of Commendation, Highwoods Properties, Developer of RBC Plaza**

“Receipt of the Certificate of Occupancy would not have been possible without your entire team . . . The attention, responsiveness and professionalism you demonstrated to me and, more importantly, to my staff, has been beyond fantastic.”

— **Excerpt, Letter of Commendation, Poyner & Spruill LLP, Attorneys at Law, RBC Plaza tenant**

“The Hardin team’s problem solving skills, strong team dynamics and good humor got us through the ups and downs that come with any lengthy, complex project. This finely crafted mixed-use tower provides an exceptional example of Hardin Construction Company’s skill and talent.”

— **Excerpt, Letter of Commendation, Cooper Carry, Architect for RBC Plaza**