



County of Roanoke

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Letter of Recommendation: MB Contractors and Thompson & Litton

In early 2014 Thompson & Litton began design work on a major renovation project for the Roanoke County's 40,000 square foot Social Services building located in downtown Salem, Virginia. The project consisted of three primary phases: roof replacement, HVAC system replacement, sprinkler system installation, and full renovation of the fifth floor.

The most challenging aspect of project design was the development of a buildable roof replacement design. Roof space was leased to the four major cellular providers in our area: Verizon, AT&T, Ntelos, and US Cellular in addition to Lumos and Cox as backhaul providers. Each carrier had its own platform, some just inches off of the roof membrane, as well as multiple antenna sleds. In all, there were approximately 40 antennas on the roof and given its immediate proximity to Roanoke College the location was considered to be critical for the carriers with only minimal down time permitted. Further complicating the roof replacement was the presence of over 20 rooftop condenser units for the existing HVAC system. In fact, at the beginning of the project, very little of the actual roof membrane was either visible or accessible.

Thompson & Litton developed numerous alternatives for relocation of the cellular carriers and all of their equipment as well as the new variable refrigerant HVAC units. The most significant design challenge was the development of a new centralized cell platform and parapet antenna racking system that was both constructible while maintaining service for the building HVAC and the cell carriers and that also met wind loading requirements. Ultimately, one of the cell carriers was relocated to the inside of the 5th floor and the remaining three were consolidated onto a single platform that was constructed over the legacy HVAC equipment. Another important owner requirement was also met in that all cable trays, conduit and loose wire were removed from the roof membrane and carried on the antenna racking system. In my 20+ years working with both vertical and horizontal construction projects, this project was the most intricate and intellectual challenging project I have worked on to date. Thompson & Litton's final design demonstrated a great deal of engineering expertise creativity.

In the fall of 2014, MB Contractors was the successful low bidder to implement Thompson & Litton's design. From the start, MB was well organized and professional. Throughout the project, which is currently nearing completion, the building has been occupied with close to 100 social workers and their clients. I have been most impressed with the care that MB has taken to work closely with the Director and Assistant Social Services Director to minimize the impacts to staff and keep them informed about the progress of the work. MB has done an excellent job in managing the behavior of its many subcontractors who were polite and deferential to staff throughout the project.

When compared to other local building contractors with whom I have recently worked, MB has been well organized. Potential change orders are carefully tracked and work plans are accurate and communicated to the owner. MB has also been very responsive to the many small issues that arise on a project of this size and complexity.

I can recommend both MB Contractors and Thompson and Litton without reservation and I would be more than happy to receive questions about their performance on our project.

Sincerely,

Richard L. Caywood, P.E.
Assistant County Administrator