NACC
North American Contractor Certification

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"NACC truly has made us a better company. It sets us apart and has made us best in class. We feel more confident in the way we're providing clients with a complete package by being certified."

- Mike Gilbert
Empirehouse, Inc.

Left: Minnehaha Academy; images courtesy of Empirehouse

NACC Case Study:

MINNEHAHA ACADEMY: PROOF POSITIVE

NACC Certified Glazier

Empirehouse, Inc.
Mounds View, Minn.

Team

President: Mike Gilbert
General Manager: James Bringle
Safety & Quality Manager: Jake Reining

About Empirehouse

In business for nearly 70 years, Empirehouse, Inc. delivers complex envelope and decorative interior systems. Over three generations, Empirehouse has progressed from small glass installations to iconic building enclosures. Today the company focuses on innovation, partnerships, technology, and advanced equipment and is the first ANSI accredited certified NACC glazing contractor in the Midwest. *Empirehouse attained NACC certification in April 2016 and was recertified in May 2018.*

About NACC

The North American Contractor Certification Program provides architectural glass and metal contractors with certification recognition through a professionally administered, third-party assessment, as a means of creating a baseline for competency and adherence to industry-accepted guidelines.

High Marks

When Minnesota-based Empirehouse, Inc. gained its NACC recertification in May 2018, the company scored 97 percent. The rating reflects the company's ongoing commitment to quality assurance and demonstrates its full embrace of NACC processes since first becoming certified in 2016. Safety & Quality Manager Jake Reining summed up the payback, "Our clients benefit from our process, controls, and procedures for delivering a high-quality end product."

Minnehaha Academy

Perhaps no Empirehouse project best illustrates NACC's value than ongoing work for Minnehaha Academy in Minneapolis, Minn. After the century-old Upper School building suffered a devastating gas explosion and partial collapse, Empirehouse joined the design and construction team to rebuild the damaged structure.

Left to right: glazing installation at Minnehaha Academy and rendering of final project

Collaboration & Expertise

Empirehouse has collaborated with general contractor Mortensen Construction and Cuningham Group Architects to understand design intent and contribute to design development. Construction is currently underway.

Collaboration, expertise, details, and accuracy have been keys to Empirehouse's success on the high-profile project. The comprehensive glazing scope includes ultra-high-performance aluminum curtain wall and storefront glazing systems, custom aluminum flat-slope skylights, and custom-fritted bird-safe glass. The exterior glazing combined with new interior glass will fill classrooms with natural light. The project is scheduled for completion in summer 2019.

Pre-Planning

According to Empirehouse President Mike Gilbert, the pre-planning methodology and quality plan put into place on the Minnehaha Academy project was a direct result of NACC procedural refinements.

"The planning, logistics, and site supervision set us apart even from ourselves prior to certification," Gilbert explained. From the documentation presented to the client to the thought processes related to design planning, he and his team saw a noticeable difference. Product placement, sequencing, delivery, and manpower were all affected by the new documented procedures.

Lessons Learned

Gilbert and General Manager James Bringle acknowledge that Empirehouse didn't have many of their processes documented prior to certification. "NACC was able to help us quantify and format a system that would work for us," explained Bringle.

Proof of Quality

The approach meant an opportunity to prove the quality measures they already had in place. "It helped us really home in on quality, to explain to our employees what quality is – that it's above and beyond doing your job," Gilbert said. "Certification says and proves to our clients that we really do care about quality, we don't just say it."

As a result of NACC, Empirehouse implemented better communication methods and better processes. The company's rigorous safety program, developed in 2009, got an overhaul with a new manual and documented procedures. Improvements were also evident in project oversight, testing, and validation.

Positive Response

Bringle says local architects and general contractors are enthusiastic when they hear about NACC. "When we talk about what NACC stands for and how it benefits owners, they get it. They are hungry for it." But for Empirehouse leadership, the proof of value comes in their team's performance. Recent feedback – delivered out of the blue via voice mail – really impacted Bringle.

"I was out at the Minnehaha project, which is very near and dear to my heart," began Mortenson Construction Vice President and General Manager Kendall Griffith, Empirehouse's GC client for Minnehaha Academy. "People were gushing about Empirehouse, [especially when] your project manager shared a documented plan for 'Best in Class Ever' for how the work was going to take place. My superintendent who had only worked with your competitors was just amazed, and the foreman complimented the execution. Thank you for being the kind of partner Mortenson looks for on our projects."