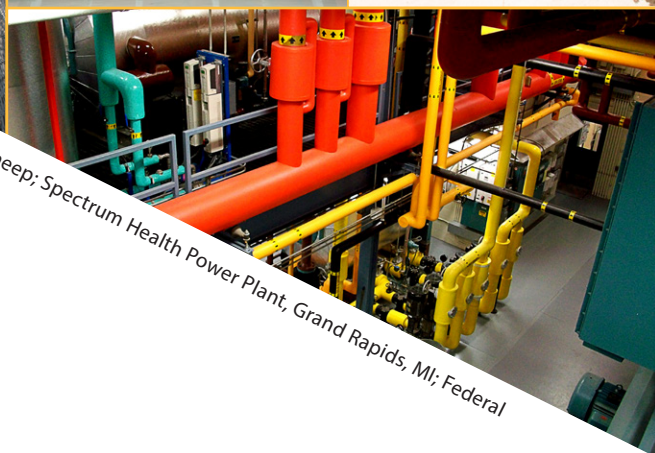


20
years

Top left, going clockwise: Black Sheep, Milwaukee; Courthouse, Milwaukee.



Construction

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KPH CONSTRUCTION

Twenty years just the start for KPH

When Keith Harenda founded KPH Construction in May 1999, he knew it wouldn't be easy competing with large established firms.

Still, he believed there was a place for a company seeking mainly to take on small- to medium-size commercial work. So Harenda acquired a property near the corner of 12th and Bruce streets in Milwaukee and began recruiting, training and hiring local workers. The effort resulted in KPH's receiving "HUB Zone" status from the Small Business Administration, a designation that goes to companies that operate and employ people in Historically Underutilized Business Zones.

Harenda also quickly began to diversify his offerings. In 2005, after providing environmental work for years, he established KPH Environmental, a full-service lead- and asbestos-abatement company. By 2010, the company had acquired SA Herbst, an environmental-training company that provides certifications in the environmental field. Adding yet another specialty, the company also developed expertise in historic renovation.

As KPH began getting more and more government contracts, Harenda saw a need to help out smaller subcontractors that might be prevented by bonding and financial hurdles from winning similar work. That led Harenda to found the Emerging

Construction Business Incubator.

All this is not to say the road has been entirely smooth. Early in 2019, after waiting to be paid more than \$12 million on a mechanics lien filed on the restoration the historic Hotel Northland in Green Bay, KPH filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy to allow the company to continue to do business.

Yet, despite the financial hardship that this single project has caused it, KPH continues to bid and perform work. It has a full-time office staff of 12 people and field crews that range from 20 to 60 people. The company does most of its work in Wisconsin but has branched out into Illinois, Michigan, Indiana and even New York.

Looking back on the past 20 years, Harenda says he has no reason not to expect more of the same from the next 20.

"I'm blessed with a wonderful team including my two brothers Kert and Ken," he said. "Some associates have been with me since the beginning, and I have an incredibly smart and hard-working vice president in Bryan Henne. With them, KPH will continue to serve a niche in the market with medium-size commercial contracting and all levels of environmental services."

—Dan Shaw