

# US BUILDERS REVIEW

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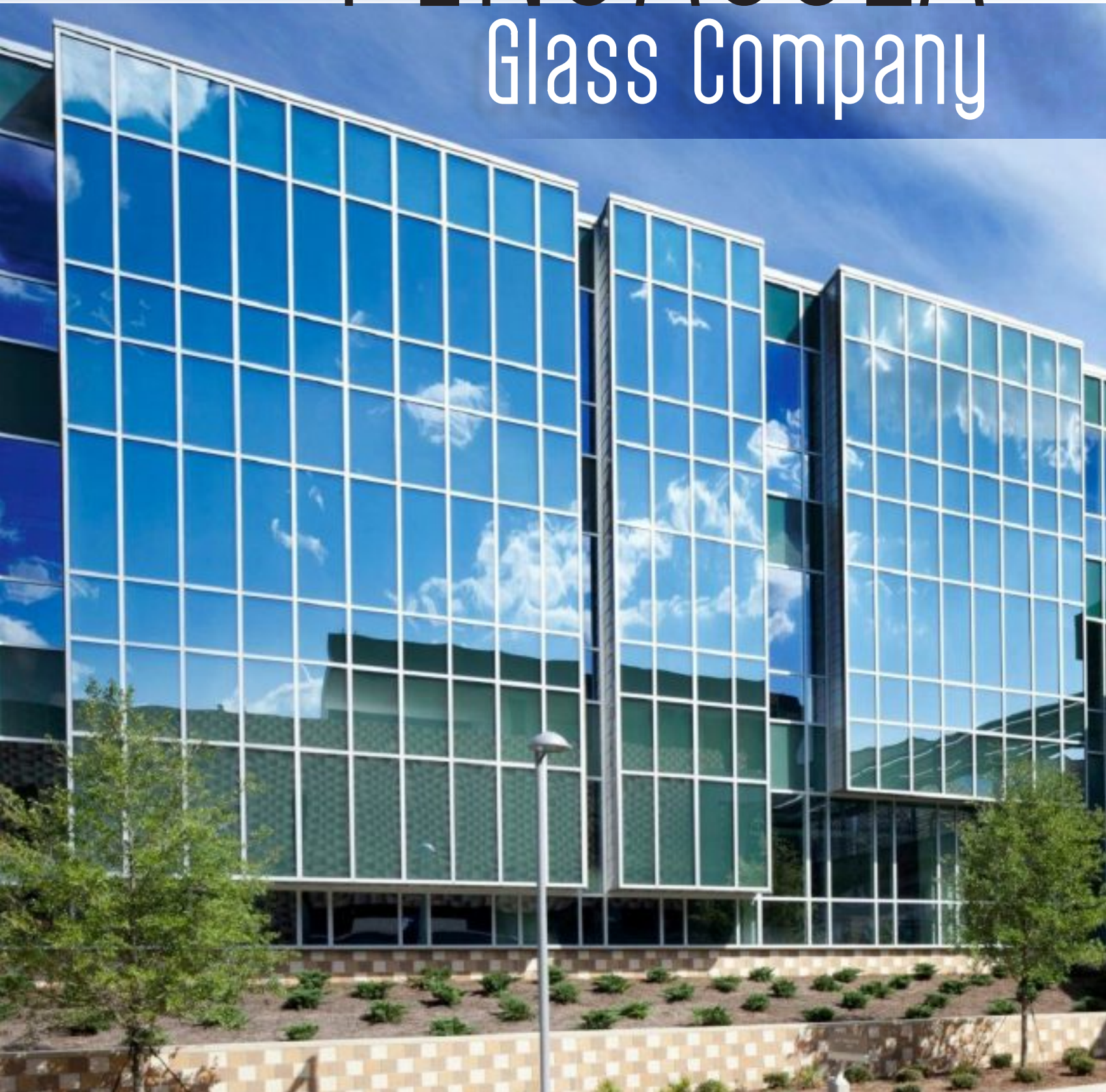
# PENSACOLA GLASS COMPANY



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# PENSACOLA Glass Company





# Delivering leading service for some of Alabama's largest building projects

Produced by Nick Randall and Written by Matt Dodge





**P**ensacola Glass Company (PGC) has been providing leading commercial and residential glass and glazing contracting services to customers throughout the Pensacola, Florida, and Mobile, Alabama, areas for over 80 years.

Founded in 1936 by the Pitman brothers, PGC is an independent subsidiary of Dothan Glass Co., which offers glass and glazing services throughout the Southeast. PGC is the largest of Dothan's four locations, which include Dothan, Alabama; Ft. Walton Beach, Florida; and Leesburg, Georgia.

While the company operates primarily in the commercial glass contracting sector, PGC provides residential and auto glass work as well.

"We've always been about 70 percent-plus commercial, but we obviously do residential as well because we're a full-service shop," says Woody Watters, general manager of PGC. "Residential still has great potential for growth, but what really drives the wagon is the commercial side."



Residential glass and glazing services include mirrors, bath enclosures, custom shower doors, bath fixtures, tabletops and insulating glass, while in the commercial sector the company specializes in the installation of storefront framing, aluminum entrances, curtain walls, windows, antiterrorism window and door products, fire-rated products, overhead glazing and sun control products.

In the auto glass sector, PGC offers replacement windshields, chip and crack repair, mobile service and free pickup and delivery from a team of nationally certified technicians. A member of the National Glass Association and Auto Glass Safety Council, PGC accepts all auto insurance and offer a nationwide warranty on all auto projects.



## On the rise

While the construction industry as a whole was hit hard by the 2008 recession, Watters says that things are starting to turn around in the Gulf Coast. "It's not coming back gangbusters, but we're seeing a steady incline in jobs coming in, especially in the medical and institutional sectors," he says.

The company has also seen a recent boom in the green building market, being called in to perform work on a number of projects seeking LEED certification. "We're seeing that market grow, but only on select projects, like a recent job that had photovoltaic panels for the University of West Florida at their new science and engineering building," says Watters.

PGC recently completed two large projects in the commercial sector, including the headquarters for one of the nation's largest credit unions. Navy Federal Credit Union will soon be relocating its headquarters from Vienna, Virginia, to Pensacola, resulting in a massive construction effort that includes five new buildings and \$20 million-plus allocated for glass work alone.

"They handle transactions all over the world and they're going through a large boom in building right now," says Watters. "We're working on two new office buildings for them right now, and the next phase will include five more office buildings, amenities building and two additional parking deck structures."

The project includes a number of green building goals and is seeking a LEED-Silver rating. For its part, PGC used a more environmentally friendly aluminum product on the project, helping Navy Federal Credit Union earn vital LEED points.



In Orange Beach, Alabama, PGC recently completed the Phoenix West II condominium project. At 32 stories, Phoenix West II is the third-tallest building in the entire state and required over \$17 million in glass work.

"It was a phenomenal building project to work on for several reasons. It presented a number of new challenges and was the tallest building we've ever work on," Watters recounts. The owners were so satisfied with PGC's work that they've already been in touch with the glass and glazing contractor to pitch in on another high-rise building project in the near future.

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## New niches drive growth

As PGC continues to build on its reputation in the market, the business is looking to a number of new technologies to help drive growth. These include blast mitigation products, which are of particular interest to the region's military facilities. "We have a lot of bases in and around the Pensacola market, so now because of Department of Defense requirements, any time we install a product on a military installation it has to meet anti-terrorism standards," says Watters.

The company is also developing an emerging niche in the production of flood-resistant glass doors. "We can provide customers with glass storefront doors that meet the Federal Emergency Management Agency(FEMA) standard of 5 feet of water," he adds.

New specialties aside, PGC still faces a number of challenges in its effort to ensure future growth. Like many in the construction industry, PGC has faced a chronic shortage of qualified workers in recent years, a problem that Watters has worked tirelessly to address.







“We have our share of qualified mechanics, but when you need another mechanic, it’s very hard to find one,” he says. “We’ve tried everything to try to get younger people to look into not just our trade, but construction in general, but they’re not really being pushed in that direction.”

While Watters values the idea of a college education, he says that post-secondary learning just isn’t for everybody. “It worries me, because over the course of the next five years the construction industry will remain one of the largest industries in the country, but if you don’t have trained people coming in, the profession is going to suffer terribly,” he says.

Not content to rest on his laurels, Watters is continually working to prepare PGC for the future. “If you’re not moving forward and making progress, you’re losing. How well you can succeed also depends on how you adapt to change, because if you don’t take action in response to change, it may be your downfall,” he says.

With 80 years in the business and a strong presence throughout the Southeast, Pensacola Glass Company will remain a leading name in the local glass and glazing contracting market. •



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