

A progressive pair: Developers Oborny, Monteferrante 'rocked' in 2008

BY PAT SANGIMINO

The former Northrock 6 movie theater — refurbished and expanded this year into upscale office space — might epitomize Occidental Management and its ownership duo.

"It's progressive," says Michael Monteferrante, who two years ago signed on to help Gary Oborny expand the business he started 11 years earlier.

The Occidental Management tale is based on this progressiveness.

"It's the story of a real estate development company that has a vision," Monteferrante says.

That vision was realized this year with the completion of the Northrock building, which now houses Occidental as well as Corporate Lodging, the anchor tenant that occupies the entire brand-new third floor.

Add to the mix retail developments in Derby and at Auburn Point in west Wichita, along with other properties throughout the Wichita metropolitan area, and you begin to understand what Oborny and Monteferrante accomplished this year.

"We built a lot of stuff this year, that's for sure," Oborny says.

And they believe 2009 only figures to be another year of growth.

"No doubt, 2008 was a great year for us in terms of mobilizing assets," Monteferrante says. "And 2009 will be the year of asset execution."

Team atmosphere

Oborny founded Occidental in 1997 as an acquisition company. The life-long Wichitan had a knack for buying land that would be in the epicenter of development.

And when the time was right, Occidental developed the land, filling in the burgeoning areas with necessary retail and office space. When Monteferrante came aboard, there was a true salesman in the group to sell it.

MICHAEL MONTEFERRANTE

"Most developers are single entities," he says. "Usually it's a very small situation with one man and the few people that help. Here it's a team atmosphere. That's really what Michael brings to the table. How we do things is a lot different than the historical way that most developers operate."

Trying Plan B

The Northrock building at 32nd Street North and Rock Road might be proof of that. When Oborny purchased it four years ago, his intent was to turn it into a big-box retail operation.

"Time changes everything," Oborny says. "The big boxes were not developing and expanding. The other option for us was to see how we could

do a mixed-use development. From that standpoint, Plan B became Plan A. The end result is that our Plan B really turned out to be better."

But not before a \$7 million dollar construction project drastically changed the look of the building. Longtime Wichitans will walk into the rounded entryway and recognize where the ticket booths, concession stand and ticket

takers once stood.

"The existing lobby is actually a very handsome space," says Ron Spangenberg of Spangenberg Phillips Architecture, who drew up the redesign plans. "The original building was very well-built. We're trying to add more value to it."

Marble, granite and contemporary lighting transformed the lobby into something new and vibrant.

"You see the warmth of the wood and the nice stones," Monteferrante

GARY OBORNY

says. "It's a relaxed setting. When I look at other

Class A office settings, I don't necessarily see that warmth, that progressiveness and that total lifestyle.

"We wanted to create something here that would differentiate us from other Class A spaces."

But it was the addition to the building that made the biggest impact.

"Adding a third floor really has increased the footprint of this building," Oborny says.

Out of downtown

Creating a special space actually lured Occidental from its downtown headquarters into the main floor of the new building — something Oborny, a life-long Wichitan, could have never envisioned.

"When you are downtown, you are a downtown," Oborny says. "Everyone is in a very dense area. You don't get in your cars as much. You tend to walk to the restaurants. ... It's a very unique atmosphere to office downtown."

He is in full support of the revitalization of downtown — as is Monteferrante. An arena under construction, along with the WaterWalk development, will only add to the downtown appeal in the coming years, they say.

"Wichita's downtown will flourish," Monteferrante says. "We believe in the whole vision of downtown. We just thought this was more centrally located for us. This is more in line with our growth pattern in terms of where we were going."

