



CASE STUDY

BLACKBURN BREW HOUSE

INNOVATION ON TAP

In the city of Niagara Falls, ON, where the Niagara River plummets 50 meters into the basin of Niagara Falls, a lightbulb lit up over the heads of a group of local craft beer brewers. They knew brewing was fun. They knew it was a solid business model, and the demand for local craft beer had been exploding in the past decade. But they also knew the barrier to entry could be high – acquiring space, equipment, capital, employees and everything else a microbrewery (a small-scale brewery specializing in craft beers) may need. What if they could create a giant brew house, taproom and community gathering place, with necessary space and equipment for up-and-coming microbreweries to give their recipes a shot?

This was a compelling idea, and the team got to work turning it into reality. Blackburn, a Canadian brewing company, had worked with Design Construct Solutions (DCS), a metal building design and supply company, to build a warehouse in recent years and trusted them to bring their vision to fruition. Whereas most microbreweries cover two or three-thousand feet, Blackburn envisioned a 38,000 square-foot, state-of-the-art brewing powerhouse.

FROM PINT-SIZED TO PINTS ALL AROUND

Rick Boivin, operations manager at DCS, remembered how exciting the idea was. “In Ontario, the microbrew industry has grown substantially in the last 10 to 15 years,” he said. “Ontario went from 70 craft brewers to something like over 600. Blackburn’s premise is that they could do large volume contracts for all of these exceedingly small locations so that they could meet more demand.” To make it feasible, though, the new facility would have to be as economical as it was architecturally stunning. That meant involving two more crucial team members: ACK Architects and Robertson Building Systems.

“When DCS was first formed in 2018,” Boivin said, “one of our very first primary goals was to seek out a joint relationship with Robertson.” In this case, that relationship proved fruitful once again, as DCS leaned on Robertson to find new ways to keep costs down.

“Our knowledge and expertise were used to produce a structural framing system that would suit the needs of the customer,” said Joel Grace, Robertson district manager. “And provide an economical solution, utilizing different profile panels.”

THINKING OUTSIDE THE (METAL) BOX

To accomplish what the client imagined, DCS, ACK and Robertson had to escape the confines of imagining metal building construction as box which is Robertson’s specialty. “This project was unique, as the client definitely had a different vision,” said Boivin.

PROJECT SPECS

Project: Blackburn Brew House

Location: Niagara Falls, ON

Builder: Design Construct Solutions

Metal panels (roof): Double-Lok®

Roof color: Galvalume Plus®

Metal panels (wall): PBR, IMPs

Wall color: Charcoal

Completion date: September 2020

WHY ROBERTSON?

Robertson Building Systems works with builders and contractors to create building solutions that meet the unique demands of the Canadian commercial and industrial industries. Our team of experts leverages cutting-edge design tools and technology to support sophisticated projects, delivering proven quality and performance across our entire integrated product offering.



"We rely on DCS to create a shell that's going to be appealing and not just look like any other metal building," said Grace. He explained that DCS and ACK accomplished this by using time-tested, proven Robertson products like reverse-rolled 26-gauge PBR wall panels in Charcoal, and incorporating other elements as counterpoints: roll-up doors, wood grain panels, concrete surfaces and large, sleek glass panels. "They took some of our most economical products and mixed them with other mediums to create a very architecturally appealing building that still fit within a budget," Grace said.

Functionality was just as vital for the success of Blackburn Brew House. "It's very easy to take a look at it and say, 'Here is the shell that someone needs,'" said Boivin. Even more crucial is comprehending the functionality the client requires. "Gathering that information and understanding their program, what they wanted to do is critical – and making sure that the structure of the building we're trying to provide meets that requirement. It also mitigates unforeseen costs and expenses," he said.

BREWING INTRICACY

"Whether it's machinery, vats or piping and steam generation and all these things, there's a lot that goes on inside the building," Boivin said. "If the building is ill-prepared, the cost overruns are quite substantial." To avoid this, Grace explained that the building was designed with maximal variability in mind, giving Blackburn "the freedom they were looking for, because they weren't entirely sure on how many brewers would be in there."

COOL & DRY - LIKE A GOOD ALE

Thanks to its 32,000 square-foot roof of standing seam, 24-gauge Double-Lok® roof panels in Galvalume Plus®, Blackburn Brew House is virtually impenetrable and guaranteed to have an unbeatably long life – no matter what Canadian winters throw at it, drop on it or try to force into its seams. Another innovative use of Robertson products was the traditional cooler – or rather, the lack thereof. "Rather than building a cooler inside of the building," explained Boivin, "the building is the cooler. DCS and ACK used Robertson's insulated metal panels in Charcoal, which provide superior thermal characteristics and all-in-one installation, to build a cooler into the very walls of the building. PBR metal wall panels in Charcoal were also made part of the design.

NOW POURING

Blackburn Brew House is now open, with 38,000 square feet of floor space housing the canning, bottling and kegging lines, taproom, retail and event space the client dreamed of. The Brew House aesthetics provide a cheerful, lively atmosphere for more than a thousand craft beer lovers between its indoor space, patio and mezzanine. But it is not just brewing enthusiasts that have taken notice. Blackburn Brew House also won the 2020 Robertson Photo Award in the Commercial Category.

TAP INTO ROBERTSON'S EXPERTISE

"I think we did an excellent job on this, and so did DCS," said Grace. "They made sure the end user got something that they can truly be proud of." DCS' Boivin agreed. "Robertson and their engineering staff were very creative to be able to bring this product together and achieve the look the brewery was after," he said. "It's impressive." Robertson takes pride in helping our partners overdeliver on projects like this one, and we're grateful to have the expertise and collective years of experience to get the job done.

Cheers to DCS, Blackburn Brew House and ACK Architects for winning a 2020 Robertson Photo Award! To learn more about how you can use Robertson products in innovative ways for your next project, contact a representative near you.