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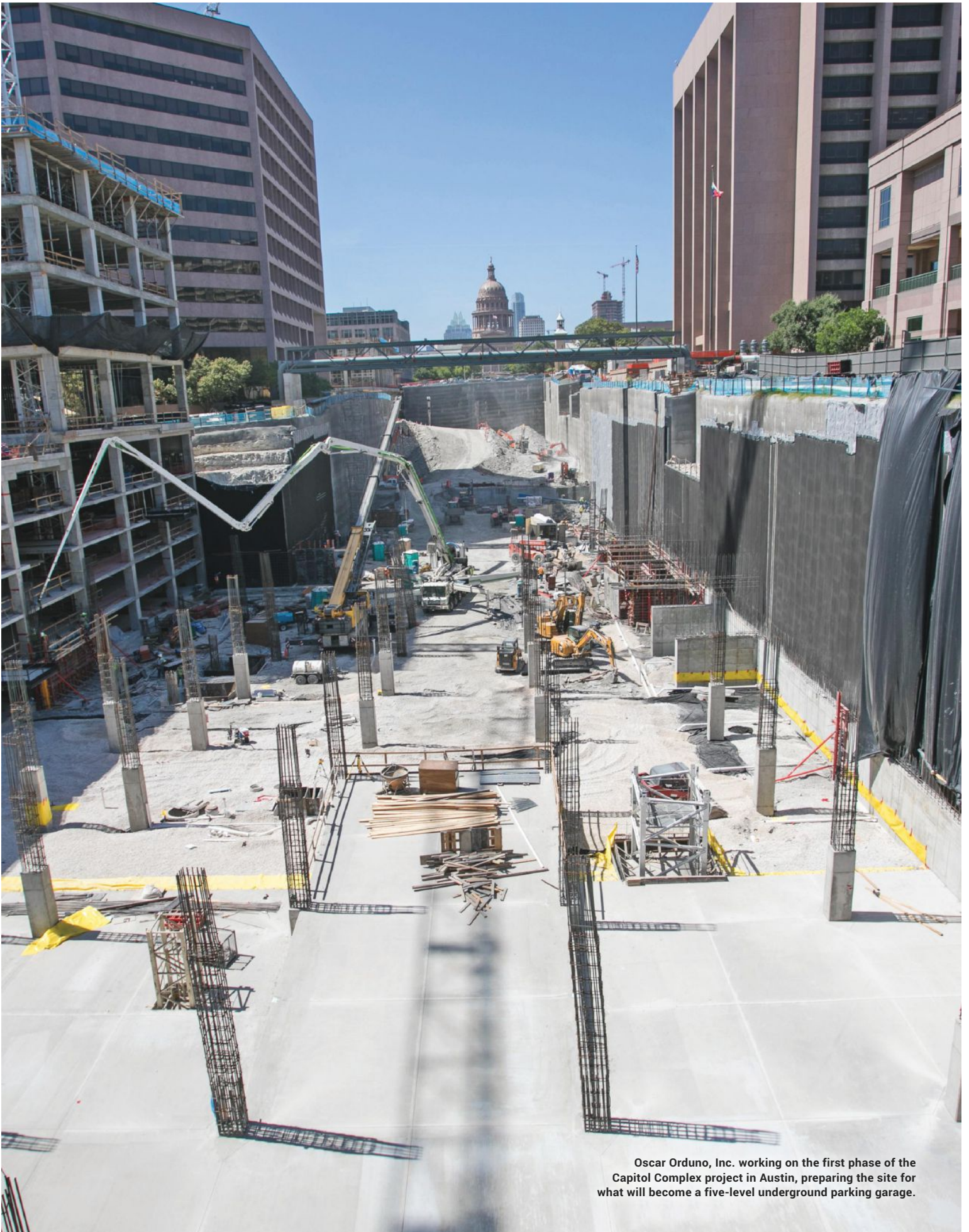
## A WATERTIGHT BUSINESS

*Oscar Orduno, Inc. is putting down deep roots in big Texas projects*

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Oscar Orduno, Inc. working on the first phase of the Capitol Complex project in Austin, preparing the site for what will become a five-level underground parking garage.



# A WATERTIGHT BUSINESS

## Oscar Orduno, Inc. is putting down deep roots in big Texas projects

by Greg Lynch

When Oscar Orduno saw his shot, he took it—and hit the bullseye.

In the six years that have passed since Oscar formed *Oscar Orduno, Inc.*, the Texas-based company has grown into a multimillion-dollar business, employing more than 200 people and working on contracts throughout the state. Operating primarily as a subcontractor, the company, of which Oscar is President, has made a name for itself in earth retention, shotcrete applications and geotechnical engineering.

Most new companies start out with small projects, but Oscar Orduno, Inc. went in another direction entirely. Oscar's first project consisted of providing architectural shotcrete on the \$2.7 billion construction of an underground express lane/toll road system beneath what may be the busiest stretch of road in Dallas: the portion of I-635 (LBJ Freeway) that runs between U.S. 75 and I-35E.

Before launching his company and securing this contract, Oscar graduated from Sam Houston State University in 2005 with a bachelor's degree in construction management, then went to work for Craig Olden, Inc. In 2007, he became a project manager, then when Craig Olden, Inc. was acquired by Hayward Baker, Inc. (now rebranded as part of the Keller group of companies), he was promoted to senior project manager.

"The tunnel project began in 2011," Oscar says. "From 2011 to 2014, I was managing all the below-grade wall construction on I-635."



Oscar Orduno, President of Oscar Orduno, Inc., on-site at the H-E-B project in Austin.

### TAKING A SHOT(CRETE)

In April 2014, as a contract for architectural shotcrete on the LBJ Freeway expansion came up for bid, Oscar saw the opportunity to go into business for himself.

It wasn't his first foray into business. Oscar has a family background in the bakery business; his father, uncles and brothers all have bakeries, and Oscar and his wife started their own bakery—El Sol Panaderia Y Pasteleria in Irving, Texas—back in 2011. When Oscar decided to start Oscar Orduno, Inc., the bakery served as collateral. But he had to move fast, particularly because his newly formed

Oscar Orduno, Inc. installed a permanent earth retention system using anchored soldier piles and rock nails (left side of photo) at the Moody Center project in Austin.



**“An in-house engineering firm was a must-have. Having in-house engineering allows us to innovate, optimize designs and makes us more competitive.”**

Oscar Orduno, President,  
Oscar Orduno, Inc.

company was trying to land a piece of one of the largest construction projects in Dallas at the time.

“It helped that I had already been on the project for three years,” Oscar says. “Managing the largest, most complex portion of the project under my previous employer gave the general contractor confidence I knew what I was doing.”

“We had to rush,” Oscar continues. “In a matter of two to three weeks, the

general contractor needed to get this contract started. I already had a legal tax consultant working on the legal setup for the bakery, and had him set up Oscar Orduno, Inc. very quickly. We set up the financials, secured a line of credit to gear up, got the equipment we needed and started the job on time with 10 employees. Fortunately, the general contractor paid very quickly, so when I was paid, I would take that back to the bank to increase my line of credit, which gave me more bandwidth to grow.”

Though the company's first contract was in shotcrete application, Oscar had bigger ideas. He secured additional contracts to provide earth retention systems on the ongoing LBJ expansion. In addition to expanding into earth retention work, the company has added wall remediation, underpinning/specialty foundations, erosion control and geotechnical applications to its portfolio of services. The company's initial success has echoed through its work that has followed, leading to a record of substantial growth.

“In 2014, we generated \$6 million in gross revenue,” Oscar recalls. “In 2015, it was \$11 million. In 2016, \$22 million. In 2017 it was almost





\$33 million, then \$36 million in 2018. In 2019 we brought in \$38 million. We were targeting \$50 million in 2020, but with the COVID pandemic, we'll likely fall somewhere in the mid-\$40 million range."

That financial success is reflected in the company's growing fleet of equipment. Oscar Orduno, Inc. is the largest owner of Doosan equipment in North America, with nearly 60 pieces from the South Korean manufacturer. The company also owns more than 20 drills, employs five full-time mechanics to maintain all the equipment, and fabricates its own steel. With 220 employees today, Oscar Orduno, Inc. has the ability to handle 16 to 18 different projects at a time.

## **BUSINESS EXPANSION**

Oscar expanded his company further in 2018 by adding Orduno Design Services, LLC, an in-house design and engineering entity.

"An in-house engineering firm was a must-have," Oscar says. "Having in-house engineering allows us to innovate, optimize designs and makes us more competitive."

Water is one of the most challenging obstacles a company like Oscar's can face, and the common theme in two of his most difficult projects to date. A new Austin-based Google building was one (see "Signature Projects" sidebar for more details), and the

other was a Dallas project where his crew encountered unforeseen water.

"Nobody knew water would be there," Oscar says. "The wall started to move as we were building it. For something like that, the remediation is very complicated. When something starts going bad, you're reacting, and it has to be fast. That was Thanksgiving weekend in 2017. We jumped on it with our engineering and operations team and had to work through the holiday to come up with the right solution, but we got it done and completed the project successfully."

"Those jobs are the ones that push you to the next level," he adds. "They make you better or they break you.





President Oscar Orduno (middle) with Cesar Gonzales (left) and Arturo Najera, both of whom are serving as Foremen on an H-E-B project in Austin.



This unified our company, brought us closer together and we knocked it out.”

Oscar saw a slowdown in business with the onset of COVID-19, which had a big impact on U.S. construction in its first three to four months. Since then, however, infrastructure work has picked up tremendously, he says, with highway projects being awarded all over the state.

“We have lots of new infrastructure projects scheduled to start in the next two to three months,” Oscar adds. “We still have lots of commercial projects on hand, but by the first

of next year, infrastructure will overtake it.”

### A NEW HOME

There is one project Oscar is particularly anxious to get started—a new headquarters for Oscar Orduno, Inc. Currently, the company leases its office space in Las Colinas and maintains its shop facilities in Saginaw, about 30 miles apart. Recently, Oscar purchased a 10-acre piece of land in Grand Prairie, where he will build his company’s new home.

“We have the plans and permits ready to go,” Oscar says. “This piece of land

used to be part of a golf course. We designed a modern office building where the clubhouse was, plus a big industrial building for shop operations. We were about to start construction in March, but when COVID-19 happened, we hit the brakes. We’re eager to get it going. When it’s complete, we’ll have about 30,000 square feet of space combined.”

Oscar is quick to share credit for his success with his clients and business contacts, with his employees, and with his partnership with The Blue Book Network. When his company was just getting started, he says The Blue Book Network was a huge help in putting the name forward, and the networking opportunities provided an invaluable resource to meet other contractors and find potential opportunities.





Preparing the area for an underground parking garage at the company's H-E-B project job site in Austin.

"Sometimes we get calls from companies I don't know that find us through Blue Book," Oscar says. "They've not only helped us find contracts, but helped contractors find us. The work we do is very specialized. General contractors that are new to the area don't know who to call, but Blue Book puts them in touch with us."

Oscar is still in his 30s; recently, he was honored with inclusion in the Dallas Business Journal's "40 Under 40" list for 2020. That youth gives him a long view as to the future of his company.

"I'm not shy about taking this company out of Texas," Oscar says. "We'll do another push and we'll take it to another level somewhere else. We're still very young. We're going to achieve a lot of things. I'm not eager to be really, really big. But we have potential and we have time." 🐾

*Greg Lynch is a mystery. With a background in journalism and private investigations, his first novel, "Plain Brown Wrapper," was published in 2016.*

## SIGNATURE PROJECTS

The company's ongoing growth has been headlined by a series of high-profile, challenging projects in major cities around Texas. In addition to I-635 work in Dallas, where Oscar Orduno, Inc. cut its teeth, some of these projects include:

- **Park District (Dallas):** A \$2.5 million project in Dallas' uptown area that started in early 2016. Oscar Orduno, Inc. took on what was then its largest commercial project and installed temporary retention walls. The team utilized an anchored soldier-pile system to retain a full city block excavated to a depth of 60 feet below-grade for an office and residential tower.
- **Block 71 (Austin):** This \$3 million project in 2018 was challenging because the site was adjacent to a historic building dating back to 1912. There were existing underground garages and a 10-story building to implode. Working around the implosion activities, the company installed a 70-foot-deep retention system, and also designed and built an underpinning system to keep the nearby historic building from collapsing.
- **MoPac Express Lanes (Austin):** This \$5 million project to improve the MoPac toll lanes in Austin came immediately after Oscar Orduno and his team completed their work on I-635 in Dallas.
- **State of Texas Capitol Complex (Austin):** The largest commercial contract to date for Oscar Orduno, Inc., this ongoing governmental project involves the construction of earth retention systems for two city blocks. Congress Avenue is being taken out to put in an underground garage, down to a depth of 70 feet.
- **University of Texas Basketball Arena (Austin):** The company was contracted to design and build a permanent earth retention system for a new basketball arena at the University of Texas at Austin. These activities began in February 2020 and are expected to be finished in November 2020.
- **Block 185 (Austin):** Google's new office project, developed by Trammell Crow Company, sits next to Lady Bird Lake, on sandy soil with water on two sides, making water intrusion a huge concern. Oscar Orduno, Inc. installed tiebacks while combating groundwater head-pressure on a diaphragm wall installed by Malcolm Drilling Company, Inc.