EnduraMax Achieves Multiple Construction Goals for Mixed Use Development.

For many years, an off-ramp dead-ended in a Milwaukee neighborhood known as the Park East corridor, near downtown. Part of an expressway plan that never came to fruition, the ramp was demolished in the nineties. The new Avenir mixed-use development now resides in place of the former ramp as one of the latest efforts in a series of projects aimed at rejuvenating the area. One of the high priority construction objectives of the development was to blend seamlessly into the surrounding established neighborhood.

“We wanted the structure to complement the classic architecture of the neighborhood,” said Scott Drees, Director of Construction for developer Wangard Partners, Inc. “There’s a lot of brick and a lot of stone masonry, but natural stone was cost prohibitive. There was also a significant focus on selecting and utilizing a system that would maintain continuous insulation and obtain the resulting thermal efficiencies.”

When lead designer Ted Haug of Legat Architects suggested the possibility of using the EnduraMax™ High Performance Wall System in conjunction with Oldcastle® masonry veneers Harvard-Brik® and Cordova Stone™, he provided a solution with potential of achieving both the aesthetic and energy goals, within budgetary constraints.

“We were looking for a thinner product to help with construction material cost, and the EnduraMax system and Oldcastle masonry products gave us the aesthetics we were looking for without requiring the structural steel of a conventional masonry system,” Drees said.

The EnduraMax system is comprised of three components—a framework of pocketed and profile-molded EPS insulation panels that attach directly to the structure, masonry stones or bricks, and pumpable mortar—that all work together to speed installation, provide a R13.6 continuous insulation thermal barrier, improve water management and acoustical comfort, and create the look of brick or stone masonry veneer.

“EnduraMax checked the right boxes for our goals and helped us to meet the new code with continuous insulation,” Drees said.

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Drees notes that an unexpected benefit of using the EnduraMax system was that it also addressed one of Wangard’s key company initiatives of bringing employment opportunities to the local community.

“There was an initial learning curve on the installation, since the product is new to our area, but we discovered that EnduraMax doesn’t require the advanced skill level of a traditional mason, which gave us the opportunity to use a less sophisticated workforce and employ some workers that we would not have been able to employ otherwise,” Drees said. “We enjoy bringing new products to the market that help employ the local workforce.”

Spanish for “come together”, the Avenir complex includes a parking garage, 7,000 square feet of retail space on the ground level, and 104 apartment units. The complex has recently opened its doors to residents and is experiencing phenomenal leasing activity, says Drees, who is currently working on plans for developing a second neighboring apartment building. According to Drees, Wangard is interested in researching opportunities to work with EnduraMax and Oldcastle masonry products for this and additional projects in the future.

“It would be nice to experiment with other finishes and textures to mimic even more of the classic Milwaukee architecture and materials,” Drees said.

The Avenir project is the first significant commercial application in the Midwest and currently one of the largest installations of the EnduraMax system in the United States (2015).

About Oldcastle® Architectural

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