A Shopping Center Goes Extravaganza

To Infuse an Attractive Shopping Center With a Dramatic “Art Disco” Stylishness, an Exterior Insulated System Filled the Bill

In one of the fastest-growing metropolitan areas of Florida—where Spanish and California-style architecture has been the dominant influence—lies an 18-year-old strip shopping center that was dramatically transformed from its nothing-out-of-the-ordinary existence to a timeless 1930s Art Deco extravaganza.

Its plaza atmosphere was achieved by use of skylighted domes, an exterior glass elevator, a magnificent fountain plus a dynamic, innovative use of elastomeric coatings over an exterior insulation system, in vibrant pastel colors—pink, yellow and blue.

Worthy of note is that this renovation and 42,055-square-foot expansion of the Dolphin Village shopping center, costing over $2 million, occurred without interruption to the normal business flow for the 40 tenants, which included a grocery store, drug store, two financial institutions, a junior department store and numerous shops and boutiques.

According to the architectural firm Mudano & Associates, Clearwater, Dolphin Village was primarily influenced by the historic Don Ce Sar Hotel along the same beach, whose art deco style has become a Florida Gulf Coast landmark.

The shopping center was acquired by the Sembler Company for approximately $2.6 million. An additional 9.5 acres of bayfront land behind the center was also purchased for possible future residential and commercial developments.

The owners, who normally develop shopping centers from the ground up, decided to purchase Dolphin Village due to its unique noncompetitive situation. Land values, which come at a premium in this area, do not support the development of other shopping malls along St. Petersburg Beach.

As Mel Sembler, founder of The Sembler Company, explained, “Since we won’t be faced with any new centers coming on the island, this expansion and renovation will benefit the smaller retailers.”

The St. Petersburg Beach area is primarily a tourist community boasting some 3,000 hotel rooms within a mile of the shopping center. There are approximately 20,000 permanent residents and between 15,000 and 30,000 tourists at any given time.

St. Petersburg Beach is located on a slender north-to-south peninsula

By Ron Hodges
Construction Product Manager
SUREWALL® Products and Systems
W.R. Bonsal Company
bordered by the Gulf of Mexico to the west and an intercoastal waterway to the east. In fact, Dolphin Village is only 300 feet from the Gulf and 200 feet from the waterway.

Dolphin Village’s new image is a visible move away from primarily beach-type tenants to more high-end, upscale tenants, both chains and independents. The “new art deco look” is designed to help attract this type of tenant and customer.

**New Coating . . .**

The use of the exterior insulation system, involving Surewall Elastocoat Rough Trowel elastomeric coating for the final decorative coat, was proposed by Largo, FL plastering contractor Smith & Sons Drywall and Plastering, member of AWCI. Smith had gained experience applying this particular exterior insulation system in a large industrial project.

As Bill Smith, owner of Smith & Sons, explained, “In the beginning, the

A hard-to-achieve stepping effect was easy with the construction system used on the six cylindrical two-story marquee towers that dominate the center.

It was an ordinary strip shopping center before its dramatic transformation into a state of the art “1930 Art Deco” extravaganza, all made possible by the new exterior insulated building system, coated with Surewall’s new rough trowel elastomeric coating.
“Their decision . . . involving one-inch rigid polystyrene boards . . . new elastomeric coating not only saved the project approximately $25,000 in materials, but allowed them to successfully achieve the intricate architectural detailing.”

project was designed to use an exterior insulation system, but it was changed at the time of estimating to metal lath and a one-inch application of regular job-mix stucco. After determining that the weight of the stucco would be too great for the existing structure, the exterior insulation system was readopted.

Originally specified were M-gauge, 6-inch steel studs. The exterior insulation system’s lesser weight allowed the use of 16-gauge, four-inch studs. And as a result, a significant portion of the framing was effectively eliminated.

As general contractor Creative Contractors, Inc., Clearwater, pointed out, their decision to adopt the exterior insulation system involving one-inch rigid polystyrene boards. The new elastomeric coating not only saved the project approximately $25,000 in materials, but allowed them to successfully achieve the intricate architectural detailing.

There were six cylindrical, two-story marquee towers with a hard-to-achieve stepping effect, four-foot spans of mirrored tile between two cornise bands on each tower and other geometric relief work. The existing structure itself had sloped tongue-in-groove fascia.

It was the plastering contractor’s first experience with the new elastomeric coating, but the product’s benefits became quickly apparent.

“I had used this particular exterior insulation system once before, liked the mechanical fastening process and had read enough about the elastomeric coating to recommend it. Once we began putting the elastomeric coating over the base coat on the EPS board, there was no doubt about its benefit to the project. We had three different shipments involved and there wasn’t one variation in color. And it matched perfectly the paint chips we sent to the manufacturer,” said Bill Smith, who had 23 men on the job during the nine-month renovation period.

“I’ll have to admit I was also surprised how well the system wrapped on EPS board. It followed the radius of the towers with no problem,” explained Bill Smith.

Another important benefit he explained was the savings in labor. The elastomeric coating is factory mixed and colored integrally using mineral oxide pigments. “We just opened the buckets and popped it on the wall,” he said.

From the perspective of the owners and general contractor, the elastomeric system, unlike conventional stucco, allowed the crews to work in small sections at a time, which, again, avoided disruption of shopping activity. “What we also liked about the system was that when the applicators were through, that was it. No painters had to come in afterwards,” commented Alan Bomstein, president of Creative Contractors.

Added to the immediate advantages of material and time savings and the ease of application are the benefits provided by the exterior insulation system to renovation projects where there are no construction plans to guide the architect or general contractor. In the case of Dolphin Village, many phases of construction had occurred over its history, which meant many unknown structural components to deal with. And the fact that those components were varied, the possibility of expansion and contraction, an enemy to stucco applications, intensified.

“But the new flexible elastomeric coating minimized these contractions and expansions, as well as the ultimate cracking and disfigurement we’ve often encountered with traditional cement stucco,” added the general
The more apparent advantages for using the exterior insulation system were increased energy efficiency, the structure’s improved resistance to the severe climactic conditions of the St. Petersburg Beach area and a four-year warranty on the exterior insulation system itself.

Designed for both new construction and renovation/reconstruction projects, the elastomeric coatings, being high-build, acrylic emulsion coatings, are ideal for decorating, weatherproofing and texturing a wide variety of surfaces.

They can be used over most above-grade surfaces, such as exterior stucco, masonry or concrete block, brick, precast or poured-in-place concrete, exterior grade plywood and cement boards.

Some elastomeric coatings can be used to decorate interior drywall, brick, gypsum plaster or wood.

At Dolphin Village, a rough trowel decorative coat of the product was applied as the final coat on the exterior insulation system. Rough trowel is but one of many finishes available.

As recommended by the Gypsum Association in their brochure on fire-resistant gypsum sheathing (GA-252-82), mechanical fasteners were an integral part of the exterior insulation system specified for Dolphin Village. A surface bonding cement was directly applied to rigid, expanded polystyrene insulation boards attached by the mechanical fasteners—in this case, 20-gauge galvanized metal clips—to the wall framing members.

This exterior insulation system offered several distinct advantages over conventional in-wall insulation methods:

- Voids and air infiltration were virtually eliminated because the rigid insulation boards formed an air-tight envelope.
- The building mass will now remain at a more stable temperature inside the insulation envelope; therefore, heating and air-conditioning become more efficient because HVAC cycling is minimized and not consumed for heating and cooling of the building mass during outside temperature fluctuations.
- The use of the low-density insulation boards and resilient adhesives will allow the building to move normally without cracking the surface coating of the system.
- The possibility of dangerous smoke inhalation caused by fire is reduced by placing combustible insulation materials on the wall’s exterior.
- The use of a surface bonding cement eliminated the need for reinforcements such as lathing with metal or glass mesh.
- The system consequently did not use valuable interior space since it was applied to the outside of the walls.

Dolphin Village, no doubt will gain recognition for all involved. The project is a fine example of contractors, architects and owners working together to find innovative and practical solutions to construction challenges. And in this situation, the solution also saved them money without any sacrifice of quality.