Today, many a company chief executive walks away from the bank without sufficient financing for a new building. Disappointed at not being able to create a new image that will better appeal to customers or tenants, I’d wager that many a CEO may not enthusiastically turn to renovation of an old building. “Sprucing up an old image” (a common view of renovation) may not be part of the corporate wish list. As often as not, the project may be put on indefinite hold.

Still-conservative new construction financing represents a business opportunity for the EIFS contractor who can help make renovation an immediate first-choice decision instead of a financial necessity. Although first con-
An exterior insulation and finish system helped the Bruce Museum in Greenwich, Conn., turn its old Victorian home into a museum-quality mansion that would accommodate more exhibits and visitors while retaining some of the flavor of the original building. Mariano Cardillo & Sons, Inc., East Norwalk, Conn., was the EIFS applicator.
tacts may have involved only preliminaries with a general contractor or a design professional, the EIFS contractor can be instrumental in getting a showplace project started now instead months or year later. Even with no formal contacts but only second-hand knowledge of a contemplated project, the assertive EIFS applicator—perhaps enlisting the help of a manufacturer in approaching the design professional—can turn a stalled or mundane project into an immediate and highly creative job.

ARCHITECTURAL MAGIC

A key is to demonstrate that the architectural magic of EIF systems can transform even the ugliest toad of a building into a prince. With creative presentations of the wide-ranging architectural possibilities provided by exterior insulation and finish systems, the EIFS contractor can lead the way toward making the project an emotional first choice as well as a wise investment for the building owner. Once a project generates real preferential enthusiasm throughout the customer organization, it will meet high-priority treatment rather than run into hidden barriers.

It is essential to show how easily formed architectural shapes—either creatively sculpted curves and angles or tradition columns, quoins, cornices and dentils—and a wide choice of textures and colors can cause a renovated building to quickly take on a whole new character.

A portfolio of “before” and “after” photos is one way to accomplish that objective. Providing reference showplace projects to visit is another. In addition to your own showcase jobs, you may want to illustrate the design versatility and durability of other buildings completed with the EIFS materials you use.

Many high quality projects throughout the country, completed over the years with a variety of EIFS manufacturers’ materials, serve the purpose. Point out that while even...
well-maintained older EIFS buildings still look good, years from now, today’s projects should look even better. The reasons: Many technical improvements have been made over the last few decades to the EIFS materials of many manufacturers. Recent developments include special engineered retrofit system guidelines for correctly applying exterior insulation and finish systems to almost any kind of substrate, as well as the introduction of special primers and conditioners for preparing aged substrate surfaces. Among other technological advances in exterior insulation and finish systems are brighter and deeper face-resistant colors, finishes with mildew resistance and special siliconized finishes for greater water resistance.

In addition to emphasizing design versatility and durability, it also is important to point out that the relatively light weight, inherent insulation value and fast installation of EIF systems with minimal disturbance to occupants and customers make these systems particularly suited for renovations.

**Differentiate Yourself**

While convincing your prospects that EIFS can completely change the character of a plain or even shabby building, you must simultaneously convince them that you are the person to do the job. Most building owners, architects and general contractors treat the choice of a qualified EIFS applicator and the selection of high quality materials produced by a reputable manufacturer as more important than any other individual specification or consideration.

The EIFS industry has grown at about a 25 percent average annual rate in recent years. As it continues to expand at a relatively rapid rate and more companies enter the industry, it is important to make your company stand out from the crowd by providing the materials and comprehensive services necessary to ensure long-term quality.

Recommend an EIF system from a manufacturer that is respected in the industry and is known for standing behind its products. Be sure that the system you apply complies with industry standards developed by the EIFS Industry Member; Association and the American Society for Testing and Materials as well as with the regulations of major building code authorities.

In addition, make sure that you obtain timely and expert assistance in architectural detailing and substrate evaluation from the manufacturer’s technical department. Also consult with technical representatives in the field.

This is particularly important on a renovation, since substrate condition of old buildings vary and may require different pretreatments or methods of EIF system attachment.

It also is important to use the most skilled EIFS mechanics when challenging substrates, unusual designs and a variety of architectural shapes will be encountered. Some EIFS manufacturers will help train and assist applicators in learning approved techniques for applying their materials to different substrates and correctly handling complicated details.

Beyond the key principles of providing quality materials and workmanship, there are several specific recommendations and considerations that will help you sell and produce a substantial and successful EIFS renovation project. These include manufacturer assistance in planning and detailing, proper evaluation of the substrate, on-site assistance and follow-up maintenance, among others.

**Planning Assistance.** Manufacturer assistance in planning will ensure correct handling of details for the particular system selected. Most EIFS manufacturers are happy to review architectural details once they are completed. Some manufacturers also offer CAD-compatible computer programs to assist architects with system specifications and drawing of EIFS details.

The primary consideration of details is to protect the EIF system from water at windows, doors, wall-roof junctures, tops and bottoms of walls, expansion joints, HVAC-unit and other wall penetrations, and trim junctures such as caps and parapets, railings and other architectural shapes. Joints also must be properly placed, and sealants, primers and backer rods must be compatible with the particular EIF system.

While you may follow generally accepted standard practices, the architect may not be so familiar with detail requirements. Some detail specification may be guided with EIFS computer programs and through fax and telephone conferences with the EIFS manufacturer’s corporate technical consultants. However, a preconstruction conference that includes a technical repre-
sentative of the manufacturer as well as the EIFS contractor is helpful on challenging projects.

**Substrate Evaluation.** Exterior insulation and finish systems are successfully used on a variety of substrates, including aged and painted or natural brick, unit masonry, tilt-up or poured concrete, stucco, tile, concrete block, glazed brick, wood siding, cement board, metal siding and exposed aggregate finish. The light weight and easy adaptability of exterior insulation and finish systems make them particularly suitable for installation on existing buildings without costly structural and substrate modifications, which often are required by heavier and less easily worked materials.

However, proper evaluation of the type and condition of the old substrate can make a crucial point for a successful project. Since each retrofit project is different, it is important
to have a manufacturers’ technical consultant evaluate the existing substrate. General manufacturer guidelines may be followed for application of the system selected, or there may be conditions that require special treatment.

Condensation and peeling paint on the existing substrate, for example, may dictate that a water vapor transmission analysis needs to be conducted. This could help determine the degree of thermal resistance—and the thickness of the insulation board required—to resolve the problem.

**On-site Assistance.** Many EIFS manufacturers offer on-site visits by technical personnel. Senergy, for example, has a corps of Technical Application Consultants, separate from the sales force, to assist the contractor in the field in analyzing substrates for retrofit and determining the proper selection and application of products. Along with Senergy’s corporate technical department, the TACs assist architects and contractors with details and specifications, and recommend methods of attachment for particular substrates to be retrofitted.

In addition to training new applicators; for EIFS contractors and updating journeymen applicators on new products and techniques, the TACs conduct on-site visits during construction to ensure that conditions are met for a labor and materials warranty, if that type of warranty (rather than just a materials warranty) has been specified, and to provide support during review with the project manager.

**Maintenance.** A new building exterior can be complete within weeks after starting an EIFS application, increasing the value and appeal of the property. Since the finish coat contains color throughout, maintenance such as repainting every five years is not required. However, while EIF systems require comparatively little maintenance, that does not mean maintenance will never be needed.

The EIFS contractor should recommend a follow-up maintenance program. This should begin with close visual inspections on a peri-
odic basis. The facilities manager or designated contractor should check for any signs of water penetration that might occur because of defects in joint sealant; improperly installed or faulty flashings, roofs or windows; gutter or scupper problems; or improperly installed or sealed pipes, signs or wires.

Follow the EIFS manufacturer’s recommended procedures for any necessary surface cleaning. If a change of color is desired at some point, be sure to consult the EIFS manufacturer before recommending a specific type of new coating. Compatibility between coatings, vapor resistance, texture changes, aesthetic considerations, and the effect on the warranty must be considered.

**DURABLE RESULTS**

If care is taken to follow these basis steps, you can expect to create a distinctive and durable EIFS-clad building. It may be as simple as a new veneer on an old building. Or, EIFS can provide a dramatically different perspective with a variety of shapes and details that totally transform the building into a new architectural creation. But no matter how simple or dramatic the design, with your own careful workmanship, quality EIFS materials and assistance from the manufacturer, you can be sure of producing another quality EIFS project that will provide much referral work for years to come.

**About the Author**

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