



Flexible Drywall Is Key to Upscale Design Appeal in Award-Winning Townhouses

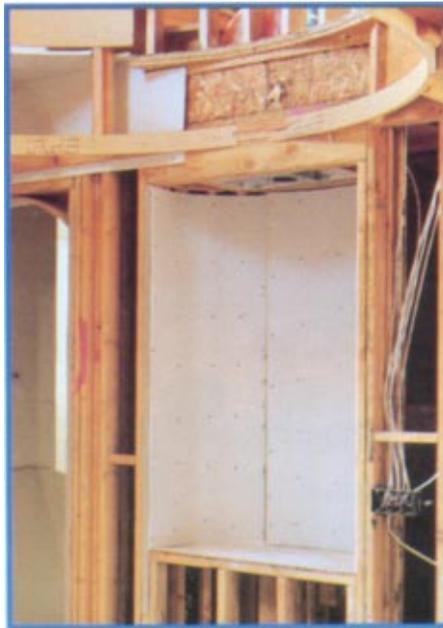
Overlooking the Pacific Ocean, 110-unit Altezza in Newport Beach, Calif., looks like a hillside town in Italy. Varying roof lines and contrasting colors give this terraced community special charm. Altezza recently won a merit award from Builder magazine. The 2,175-square-foot Plan C won a grand award for its functional layout, fireplace and entry rotunda.

Adding to the interior appeal of the townhouse design plan is the liberal use of curved wall surfaces. The rounded soffits, archways and art niches were all constructed using a quarter-inch flexible drywall panel from United States Gypsum Company, Chicago.

SHEETROCK brand 1/4" Flexible Gypsum Panels are relatively new to the construction market. But they're much in demand. They allow architects and builders to specify curved interior surfaces without adding excessive costs per square foot. Wall contractors also like the flexible panels because they're quick and easy to install.

U.S. Gypsum's 1/4" Flexible Gypsum Panels are factory-fabricated, composed of a fire-resistant gypsum core encased in heavy natural-finish paper on the face side and strong liner paper on the back. But unlike standard quarter-inch gypsum board, Flexible Gypsum Panels can

be bent to as tight a radius as 7 inches. They can be installed wet or dry.



When applied vertically, Flexible Gypsum Panels can be installed to an 11-inch radii when dry, 7-inch radii when wet.

"There are other quarter-inch boards out there for round walls, but they don't bend as well," said Bob Gillespie, vice president of Champion Drywall, Anaheim, Calif., drywall contractor for the Altezza townhouses. "You're better off wetting half-inch board than using the other quarter-inch brands."

Creating Upscale Appeal

Altezza was designed by Scheurer Architects of Newport Beach, Calif.,

and developed by London-based Taylor Woodrow Homes California. Townhouse prices range from the mid \$300,000s to \$700,000 on up.

The interiors feature high ceilings, ceramic tile flooring and raised panel interior doors. But one detail especially lends an upscale feel: the sculptured application of drywall. Stylized fireplace surrounds, curved staircases, rounded soffits and art niches are found in each unit.

Curved surfaces may seem to be a difficult installation, but they're not. Precision is the determining factor, and that's something on which Champion Drywall prides itself

"The most important thing is to check the alignment of the framing. The 1/4" flexible board is so thin that it will follow the framing exactly," Gillespie said.

That's why Champion Drywall always does a thorough framing check before undertaking any wall installation. Champion inspectors mark framing areas they feel might pose a problem and promptly notify the framers. The upfront cost of the procedure is about \$25 per unit, Gillespie estimates, but it's worth the investment. "That \$25 investment might be saving you hundreds of dollars in return calls," he said. "It's cheaper to fix things up front."

Need a handy way to check stud alignment? Champion Drywall crews typically use a long piece of half-inch diameter PVC. The PVC is flexible enough to bend along the framing, allowing wall contractors to see which studs might need to be repositioned for a smooth radius.

Panel Installation

At Altezza, installation of the flexible panels proceeded methodically. Two-man crews were used to carefully work the panels around the framing-supporting, pulling and gently pressing the panels into place.

“When you install flexible gypsum board, use two people,” Gillespie advises. “Start at one end of the radius and slowly bend the board around the curve, taking it up with nails as you go. But don’t drive the nails too hard. The board is under stress, and you want to avoid fracturing it. We tack it up to hold the contour we want, but once that’s achieved we go back and screw attach it.”

SHEETROCK brand 1/4" Flexible Gypsum Panels are normally installed in a double-layer application.

“The first layer has to be positioned just right,” Gillespie said. “It’s the first layer that determines how the contour will look.”

Champion crews centered the face layer over the joists of the base layer panels. They used 1-inch screws to secure the base layer and 1-5/8" screws to fasten the face layer.

Gillespie said his crews encountered no problems. The framers had put in enough studs to form the proper con-

tours. Even in the tight radiuses, such as the 2-foot-wide niches, application of the Flexible Gypsum Panels went smoothly. Stud spacing was 3 inches on center in such areas, and 6 inches to 8 inches on center in the larger radii. “We didn’t need to wet the 1/4” flexible

board on this project,” Gillespie said. The wall surfaces were skim coated with joint compound. A knockdown spray texture finish was applied. Champion Drywall is pleased with the finish, but also is happy with the bottom-line cost of the installation. 