Philadelphia Luxury Home
Project Spotlight: December 2012

LOCATION:
Private Residence
Philadelphia, PA

TILE INSTALLER:
Schlichter Tile & Marble
Pipersville, PA

LATICRETE DISTRIBUTOR:
Mohawk Tile & Marble
King of Prussia, PA
LATICRETE Helps Transform Suburban Home to Idyllic Luxury Retreat

by Ron Teister and Chris Keating

Does this make sense? A veritable getaway retreat offering a private koi pond, an outdoor cabana and an infinity ledge pool... in the Northeastern part of this country? At first thought, no. However, there actually are people who foresee coming home to a lifestyle like that every day. In this case, it was some extremely forward-thinking homeowners. This was their actual vision, and it provided design parameters for a totally unique mega-renovation project located at their private, residential home originally built years ago in Philadelphia’s upscale Main Line district.

Overall, the owners’ plans were to take specific amenities and luxuries of a vacation destination, and then incorporate them as part of everyday, suburban home-life.

While this scheme to build such a unique home might be a dream scenario for homeowners, it could potentially create a nightmare of challenges for designers and installers. To begin with, it is not often specific features such as those described above are part of a residence in the ‘burbs. And, with an uber-project such as this, obstacles tend to abound including unforeseen sloping and pitch of old flooring, trying new and different building materials and last, discussing options/creating mockups from off-the-cuff, random conceptual ideas, without having any hardcore, specific plans or clear-cut, explanatory blueprints. Luckily in this situation, all those involved relative to bringing the owners’ visions to life were not only more than qualified to complete this highly atypical job; they actually thrived under these challenging conditions.

The owners were heavily involved in this project from the beginning, and were included in every phase, setting the scope of what they envisioned. Initially, the basic premise of the project was to add a greenhouse to the back of the home and then renovate the adjoining kitchen, living room and outdoor patio with new natural stone. During those actual installations, it was then decided to proceed way outside of these original plans and add a new infinity ledge style pool, a downstairs cabana, a game room, a “wine area”... and then, to connect the upper and lower levels with an exquisite, one-of-a-kind circular stone staircase.

“The homeowners were constantly pushing the limits for this job,” said Rob Schlichter, President of Schlichter Tile & Marble of Pipersville, PA. “To some contractors, this kind of situation can be daunting and downright annoying. However, we are a third-generation company who has been there and done that. The fact that the owners were so involved and specific about their needs helped us know exactly what they wanted at all times. Quite honestly, all we had to do was go and make it happen. We believe that when you have the talent and experience around you, working in unique situations becomes much, much easier.”

Schlichter’s seasoned team has a history of welcoming more challenging, innovative and highly creative projects. “We strive to add to our already-versatile capabilities by employing a ‘work outside the box’ mentality, which has allowed us to tackle some unusual projects that other contractors either simply don’t or won’t even try.”

This project, which took nearly three years to complete due to installation complexities and the sheer magnitude of the residence, involved an extensive amount of tile work, both interior and exterior, and a vast amount of natural stone, as well. “We installed over 400 tons of stone just on this one residential project,” Schlichter stated. “That is some serious stone. We were getting deliveries almost every day.”
Along with the amount of tile and stone work needed, even though Schlichter had total confidence in his team, he needed to be sure the installation system being used was 100% reliable. Therefore, Schlichter insisted upon the only product lines he knew which he could absolutely count on... those of the LATICRETE® SYSTEM. “For this job, it seemed as if we utilized the entire LATICRETE product catalog!” exclaimed Schlichter. “If I had to sit here and list to you all the LATICRETE material we went through, we would be sitting here until the next week. This project pretty much utilized the whole line of LATICRETE thin-sets, mortars, grouts and floor levelers. We wanted only the best.”

Due to the magnitude of stone used, installation procedures were enhanced by incorporating LATAPOXY® 310 STONE ADHESIVE, a two-component, high strength epoxy adhesive, which is ideal for affixing natural stone on vertical surfaces. LATAPOXY 310 STONE ADHESIVE made it possible for a fast and permanent bond for all stone surfaces, and the owners could rest assured that even if indoor temperatures became very hot, there would be no sagging.

And, obviously, because this grandiose renovation included the new infinity ledge style pool, there were needs for waterproofing. So, to accomplish that, HYDRO BAN® was the product of choice. Schlichter’s team selected this single component, self-curing liquid rubber polymer because it forms a flexible, seamless waterproofing membrane and bonds directly to a wide variety of substrates.

“The versatility of the product line, vendor support, knowledge base and personalized attention by our territory manager to ensure timely delivery of product through local distributor and proper application/usage, made choosing LATICRETE materials the easiest part of the job,” stated Schlichter.

“The LATICRETE System and the way all products work together is really something special,” Schlichter continued. “Like I said, we have been around for three generations and have seen and used almost every installation product out there. We have seen the changes in these products year after year, and LATICRETE materials are just the most effective. My father, who has been a tile contractor his entire working life, is convinced that LATICRETE products are the best thing to happen to this industry. Ever. What can I say? I like their stuff!”

This project challenged not only Schlichter’s team, but LATICRETE as well. “This was a huge job,” said Brian McMahon, LATICRETE Technical Sales Representative. “There was a special focus on thin-set applicators. This home had so many unique features, and it showed how versatile our products are while always maintaining effectiveness. It really highlighted how our stuff can be used aside from just tile installation.”

That being said, McMahon knew that while LATICRETE supplies the products, it takes a pro to get the job done. “Our products are top-notch, however they will not be 100% effective if the installer does not know what to do. Schlichter Tile & Marble understands our materials, how they work together as a system, and the proper way to install them. We have a great partnership with the people at that company. And, their work helps us look good, too.”

“I am extremely proud of our company,” Schlicter concluded. “This is the type of project that simply ‘wows’ people. We believe this is a perfect example of award-winning contributions from everyone involved. But, quite honestly, we have been doing this sort of work for years and are used to completing these types of jobs. So, at the end of the day, we were able to produce something that our customers can be proud to call home.

“We couldn’t have done it without the LATICRETE System.”