



Globally Proven  
Construction Solutions

# Private Luxury Bathroom Project Spotlight



**LOCATION:**  
Northern Virginia, USA

**INSTALLER:**  
Collins Tile and Stone  
Aldie, VA

**DESIGNER:**  
Tracy Sheffield  
Chantilly, VA

**LATICRETE DISTRIBUTOR:**  
Daltille  
Manassas, VA



## Creating a Luxury Bathroom At The Highest Levels

by Ron Treister

Northern Virginia is the highest income region in its state, having seven of the twenty highest personal income counties in the entire United States... including the top three as of 2009. In this well-heeled part of our country, there is a population base of 2.6 million, which includes a huge percentage of high-ranking government and military officials. These are powerful people, many of whom are decision-makers of the highest degree. It's not out of context, therefore, that when homeowners residing in this region decide to have a bathroom remodeled, they decide to learn as much as possible about the process, and then contract an incredibly professional team with very strong credentials to handle this work, expecting nothing less than total excellence.

Such was the case for a major remodeling project of a master 350 square foot bath, where the homeowners wanted to transform the original space built in 1999 into a more spa-like environment with very special appointments. The bathroom's well thought-out overall design plans called for having a steam shower with a vertical wall spa and separate handheld shower, an exhilarating air tub, a beautifully detailed tray ceiling, Roman Corinthian columns and special LED lighting. From a performance standpoint, porcelain tile was the best choice for the steam shower; the material chosen combined impeccably with the originally selected stone floor and decorative wainscoting. And, for the room's floor, the owners were very focused upon having the best possible electric floor warming system installed, as well.

It was not surprising, therefore, that they contracted with Collins Tile and Stone, a quality-driven firm that has built a solid reputation throughout Northern Virginia based upon refusing to work at any grade level less than optimal.

"It's not every day you're awarded the contract to build a six-figure bathroom," stated Buck Collins,

President of Collins Tile and Stone. "The owners knew of our commitment to quality; they knew that we would not sacrifice one iota of anything to cut corners. So this project started out on the right foot. We understood each other."

The stately house itself was only 13 years old, so conventional wisdom would ostensibly state this remodeling project shouldn't have any of the major obstacles that surface when a dignified older home is about to be remodeled. Not so.

"Before we started any work whatsoever, we had to make sure that we had the right plan of attack," stated Collins. "This house was built with floor joists that were 24 inches (on center) apart from each other. That size is almost unheard of, so we decided to get some expert advice prior to installing the flooring. Fortunately, we have some of the finest technical representatives servicing our company. Perhaps the best is Kurt Weber, our LATICRETE Technical Representative.

"So, it was collectively decided that initially, we would both glue and then screw-in an additional layer of plywood underlayment to the existing 3/4" subfloor to mitigate any deflection whatsoever. From there, we took Kurt's sage counsel relative to using the LATICRETE® System. Before we installed the first piece of tile," continued Collins, "we primed this plywood with LATICRETE Admix & Primer, as we wanted this substrate to be in ideal condition for the next step, which was the installation of LATICRETE Floor HEAT, a product we consider to be the cr me de la cr me of its genre."

Collins, whose company installs electric floor heating in 80% of its residential projects, went on to state that Collins Tile and Stone uses LATICRETE Floor HEAT exclusively, not only because it is the "easiest system to install," but also because "unlike a 12 watt system, at 15 watts it heats up a floor much more rapidly."



Once the LATICRETE® Floor HEAT was put in place, Collins' skilled craftsmen covered it with LATICRETE 86 LATILEVEL™, a cementitious powder that is mixed with water to produce a free-flowing, self-leveling underlayment mortar for rapid leveling of interior subfloors.

Another installation challenge arose with the bathroom floor's stone "rug." Its border and inside marble tiles were of different thicknesses; the basket-weave design inside the border consisted of material that was 1/8" thinner than that which made up the border. To best meet this challenge, the installers flash-backed the inside stone using LATICRETE 4-XLT for optimal performance, assuring that both materials were perfectly level with each other, eliminating any possible lippage. LATICRETE 4-XLT is a multi-use, polymer fortified adhesive mortar built on the new LATICRETE Water Dispersion Technology™ (WDT) platform. WDT provides for the complete dispersion of water within the mix allowing users to achieve the desired application consistency.

The new steam shower was constructed with Daltile 13 x 13 porcelain tiles set diagonally on the walls and ceiling with LATICRETE 4-XLT. Proper accommodation/movement joints were installed using LATICRETE LATASIL™, which matched the LATICRETE PERMACOLOR® Grout that was used throughout the entire project. LATICRETE LATASIL is a high-performance silicone sealant designed for use in coves, corners, changes in plane and expansion joints in exterior and interior applications of tile and stone. LATICRETE PERMACOLOR Grout is a fast-setting and color-consistent material providing a grout joint that is extraordinarily dense and hard.

"Collins Tile and Stone is a member of The National Tile Contractors Association (NTCA) Five-Star Program, which was created by the association's board of directors as a way to recognize a select number of companies with a proven track record of excellence in our trade. Our installation team consists of individuals who have become Certified Tile Installers (CTI) via the very demanding program offered by the Ceramic Tile

Education Foundation (CTEF). We want to do the job right, and our people have the highest credentials to do just that," added Collins. "But because every tile project is unique, we don't have all the answers for every installation. Because of that, we have to turn to trusted business partners. That's why so often over the years, I've called on Kurt Weber of LATICRETE to bounce around ideas and ultimately, come up with the best possible solutions. We are fortunate to have such a great relationship with our suppliers.

"And for a job such as this," concluded Collins, "the synergy of working with professional, world-class companies such as Daltile and LATICRETE, was just incredible. Ultimately, this project will speak for itself for many, many years."

Kurt Weber added, "Good business is built upon good relationships, and we at LATICRETE certainly have one with Collins Tile and Stone. Whenever we partner with people with a similar mindset that is based upon working at the highest levels of professionalism and using only the finest materials, it continually will be a win-win for all involved."



Photography courtesy of Collins Tile and Stone  
[www.collinstileandstone.com](http://www.collinstileandstone.com)