MAYO UNDERWOOD BUILDING
Project Spotlight

DEVELOPER:
CRM Companies
Lexington, Kentucky

GENERAL CONTRACTOR:
D.W. Wilburn, Inc.
Lexington, Kentucky

ARCHITECT:
EOP Architects
Lexington, Kentucky

CONTRACTOR:
Martina Bros. Co., Inc.
Lexington, Kentucky
The Challenges

Reclaimed Marble Panels Honor the Past While Embracing the Future

The Situation

When a historical landmark is demolished, it can be a devastating experience for the community. For the citizens of Frankfort, Kentucky, it would be the promise of a new future. The 1970s-era Capital Plaza Tower, a building that has loomed over downtown Frankfort for nearly 50 years, would be replaced with a state office building. This new four-story building would be designed to house nearly 1,600 state employees. The Commonwealth of Kentucky in downtown Frankfort tapped CRM Companies and D.W. Wilburn, Inc. to spearhead the massive project. CRM would act as the developer and D.W. Wilburn would serve as the general contractor and part-owner of its redevelopment. The project would include the relocation of site utilities and demolition of the existing Capital Plaza Tower and Frankfort Convention Center. It also would involve the site design as well as construction of a new office building, parking garage and plaza configuration. Plans for a parking garage required a four-story building to accommodate more than 1,000 parking spaces. A 388,000 square-foot (36,046 m²) office building would include a spacious lobby, hearing rooms, a health clinic, a sundry shop, mechanical and electrical rooms, as well as a loading dock area.

Designed by EOP Architects of Lexington, Kentucky, the LEED-certified structure would be constructed with the future in mind. It was built with state-of-the-art technology in an environmentally friendly, energy-efficient and employee-centric design. The construction team was instructed to salvage large vintage marble panels that lined the original Capital Plaza Tower’s lobby walls. Reclaiming the slabs for the new building’s lobby, the design would embrace the future while honoring the past.

Martina Bros. Co., Inc. was tapped to be the contractor responsible for the retrofitted marble as well as the tile flooring in the lobby. “We were tasked with salvaging all the marble panels from Capital Plaza Tower and repurposing them for the new government building,” said Dino Martina, President of Martina Bros. Co., Inc. “LATICRETE recommended LHT™ polymer modified large and heavy tile mortar and MULTIMAX™ Lite, a lightweight versatile polymer modified thin-set, which delivered the results we were looking for on this project.”

Besides recycling the marble panels, other sustainability efforts would be taken in this project. Most of the rubble from the demolition of Capital Plaza Tower would be used to construct the new building’s foundation. In addition, materials from the tower would be utilized to create an artistic tree sculpture for the lobby.
A LATICRETE Solution

Because of the laborious process of cutting and retrofitting each marble slab, a solution needed to be made that was effective and durable. LATICRETE provided the installation and setting materials that would ensure the flooring and marble panel walls would be applied on time and within the parameters of the phased schedule. Combining excellent workability with optimum large and heavy tile performance, LATICRETE® products solved the crucial needs for both the tile flooring and marble slab walls.

The tile flooring of the lobby was installed using LHT™, a polymer-modified large and heavy tile mortar. Specifically formulated to provide a one-step installation for large format ceramic tile, porcelain tile, marble and stone on floors, this solution provided a painless and long-lasting application. LHT exceeds ANSI A118.4 H standards and is effective at supporting heavy tile and stone, while reducing lippage problems. It has a buildup of up to ¾ inch (19 mm) without shrinkage or set-up time issues.

The marble panels were installed with MULTIMAX™ Lite, a patented, lightweight versatile polymer modified thin-set that provides maximum non-sag performance on walls. It has a maximum buildup of up to ¾ inch (19 mm) without shrinkage and provides maximum coverage due to its lightweight creamy smooth consistency. In addition, MULTIMAX Lite is fiber reinforced for maximum strength and performance. MULTIMAX Lite is also GREENGUARD certified and contains more than 10% post-consumer recycled content. To top it off, the revolutionary patented formula is equipped with Microban® antimicrobial protection, which eliminates damaging microbial growth on surfaces without impacting aesthetics or functionality.

“We selected LATICRETE products because of the outstanding support from their team,” said Martina. “They went the extra mile to give support and even came out to the project to make sure everything was in working order. They went above the call of duty.”

Outcome

With the phased design, the implementation of quality materials combined with the tireless efficiency of the teams involved led to a successful completion. The project was finalized almost five months ahead of schedule while achieving budgetary expectations and exceeding required safety standards.

In August 2019, during a dedication ceremony, the state government building was officially given its name. Standing on the former site of the Mayo-Underwood School, which served as Frankfort’s African American educational institution from 1929 to 1963, the Mayo-Underwood Building name sealed the legacy of the structure. The important link to the city’s past is further recognized with a monument and plaque standing outside the entrance, paying tribute to those who attended the school and forever memorializing what the structure stands for.

“By naming the Mayo-Underwood Building, my intent was to remember and recognize what was here before, to honor the past while we move into the future,” Finance and Administration Cabinet Secretary William Landrum III said at the ceremony, as recorded by The State Journal.