

# PAVERS HELP INSPIRE Old English APPEAL IN MONTGOMERY



When “walkability” is a cornerstone of a project, it’s important to choose material that will hold up to pedestrian traffic, as well as help slow vehicular traffic. When you’re creating a community with a classic design and charm, the material also must be beautiful and inherently sustainable. For Montgomery’s new Hampstead— a “new urbanist” town that combines commercial and residential development— concrete was the perfect answer to a multitude of needs.

“When you have a community that you want to last literally for centuries, we wanted to find the most durable and most authentic building materials that we could,” said Anna Lowder, director of design and development for Hampstead. “With contractor Brasfield & Gorrie’s help, we wanted to make sure these buildings would have longevity to them, so we chose



materials like concrete, wood roofs and cast iron. We relied on concrete to make something that was aesthetically beautiful and long-lasting,” she said.

Hampstead was designed by Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company, Inc. DPZ, a major leader in the practice and direction of urban planning, having designed more than 300 new and existing communities in the United States, including the famous Seaside, Fla., and Alys Beach projects. DPZ designed the site plan taking into

consideration the natural features of the land and with an effort to retain all of the existing mature trees.

“Everything in Hampstead is designed around the pedestrian experience,” says Lowder. “It started in 2005 when DPZ came in to do the conceptual layout that meant that everything needed



to be within a five-minute walk of the town center. To do that, we have an interwoven street network that has sidewalks throughout the community, on both sides of the street. Our sidewalks actually take people somewhere. It's a cohesive way for people to live."

Sustainability is a key word of new urbanism and the Hampstead development. The concept is returning to a more traditional way of planning a development, with a mixture of uses. Civic spaces like churches and schools, residential development including town houses, starter homes, larger traditional homes; as well as gardens and parks are featured in this new community. One area flows into another, so the materials need to work together.

Developers chose a variety of concrete pavers to help create the desired look of Hampstead, while ensuring its longevity.

"Hampstead, like all new urban projects, tries to be as sustainable as possible. A highly durable and aesthetically pleasing product like concrete pavers will have a much longer life than many other products," explains project design architect Gary Justiss, who worked in cooperation with Birmingham-based Turner Batson Architects, which was the architect of record for the project.

"The longer a product lasts and looks good enough to be appreciated, the longer it can remain in service. It will, hopefully, never end up in a landfill. Pavers are especially sustainable since they can be maintained. If a small area needs to be removed for repair or access to subgrade, a large area need not be disturbed and replaced," Justiss said.

For the town center civic plaza, the architect selected a tumbled, rounded paver that simulates cobblestone. It is the same product that was used in the renovation of Montgomery's historic Court Square, which was renovated earlier this year, as well as in DPZ's new Alys Beach. The concrete lends an Old World feel to the development. The product has natural gaps that mimic old Roman cobblestone streets, while being extremely durable, low maintenance and also economical.

"It was a great aesthetic choice for us," Lowder said. "It has an older, classic appearance, and it's a more shapely street material. Drivers recognize this is not an area to park; it's reserved for public gathering space. It's a great way to have a material like concrete present itself in a way that people find appealing."

More traditional concrete pavers were used at the exteriors of Hampstead's commercial buildings, as well as in exteriors of residential buildings, in addition to traditional poured concrete.

The paver products were used in the commercial buildings and on the ground floor walk ways. The buildings are open to the elements with covered pedestrian paths that catch nice breezes. The attractive pavers draw pedestrians in from the sidewalks and up to the entrances to the buildings, but are a sturdy material that is durable enough for the commercial setting.

In addition to the pavers, Hampstead utilized approximately 2,500 square feet of retaining wall. This construction allowed developers to build up an area where the ground sloped, leveling it out and providing more usable land for home sites. The concrete is a rough-hewn tumbled block in a tan color that mimics natural stone. It functions perfectly with the chosen aesthetic of the development, while lending the necessary strength to this aspect of the project.

Located on 416 acres in East Montgomery, Hampstead is in its first phase, which includes more than 80,000 square feet of retail and office space in three mixed-use buildings. Eventually the development will have three neighborhoods, each with its own core, and more than 1,600 homes.

A "Y's Up" fitness center run by the YMCA and a new restaurant, Number Sixteen, are already open. The community hosted a number of events, including a "Novemberfest" featuring polka music and a beer tasting. Residents began moving into the first neighborhood in November.

By selecting concrete products, Hampstead's developers met their objective of creating a beautiful sustainable community that will withstand the test of time. ■ by Wendi Lewis

