



thinking OUTSIDE the box

An ambitious schedule, a tight budget, a creative mixed-use design—the factors involved in the construction of the new High Point Town Center in Prattville, Alabama—presented a unique combination of challenges. Developers McClinton & Company of Montgomery and AIG Baker, based in Birmingham, teamed with nationally known retail development architectural firm Richard L. Bowen & Associates, Inc., to tackle the job.

Construction on the lifestyle center was set to begin in January 2008, with a target opening of fall the same year, in time for retailers to set up for the holiday shopping season. Anchor retailers JC Penney and Belk would handle their own construction, with the big-box style structures built using tilt-wall construction. That left 12 retail buildings totaling about 200,000 square feet, as well as site preparation work, outparcel development and an adjacent retail property that would house a Best Buy, Publix and additional smaller retail shops. The project included a total of 490,000 square feet of developed space.

The developers chose to use tilt-up construction on the 200,000-square-foot retail space because it allowed them to meet their tough demands. “What we do is try to solve other people’s problems when it relates to our discipline. In this case, the solution

was tilt-up. Basically, a center like High Point Town Center wouldn’t normally be considered for tilt-up,” said Glenn Doncaster, president of Citadel Contractors, Inc. “It’s usually used for big-box spaces and warehouses. These are a lot of small buildings, fairly intricate, with a lot of details,” he said.

Tilt-wall construction is an innovative and effective method of construction. Panels are cast on the project site and lifted into place. Once tilted into place, each panel locks in all the beauty and strength that architects and engineers design, at a fraction of the time and expense of conventional construction. In addition, it’s efficient, and secures a more rapid building occupation. This fast-track delivery system conserves time and controls costs.

Tilt-wall construction is not as common in the type of retail area at High Point Town Center because the walls have a more intricate design, with lots of openings for windows and doors and other details, rather than the standard flat panels used most often in big-box panels.

“The key in this project is you have 200,000 square feet of small shops for retail and over 200,000 square feet of wall. Typically a big box store has lot more floor area than wall. It’s tough no matter what you’re building in to create those openings,” Doncaster said.



The panels were set to keep architectural features from conventional construction into tilt-up. The complexity of the panels set new standards in the tilt-up construction industry.

Mike Woods, principal with Richard L. Bowen & Associates, worked with AIG to design the site, and then teamed with Citadel to execute the plans. He worked with tilt-wall on a previous lifestyle center in North Carolina, and had confidence in the concept for the Prattville project.

“The material selection was really set by the schedule,” Woods said. “Tilt-wall worked for what we needed to do based on the schedule and the budget constraints we had. It worked from the standpoint of color, how we needed to set up the Main Street theme, scheduling and sequencing. Once we knew this was the way we were going, everything fell into place, and it was a great way to go.”

Ted Powell, director of architecture for AIG Baker, was confident in the decision to use tilt-wall construction for the project, even though AIG had not worked with the material outside a warehouse

or big-box store concept in the past. He felt the tilt-up design concept answered a lot of questions for the project.

“Tilt-wall offers both cost savings and savings in construction time,” said Powell. “In my opinion, we also get better quality and more durability than we would with some of the other products available.”

Working with tilt-wall is easier as far as timing. Most of your work is done on the ground. You basically build the panels and then lift them with a crane. You’re not as impacted by weather; you don’t have a lot of people up on scaffolding, and it just goes faster.”

Another benefit of tilt-wall is it’s a hard wall system, so it’s resistant to the elements, and requires little to no maintenance. In terms of longevity, it creates a 100-plus year building with no physical depreciation.

In addition to the large amount of tilt-up incorporated into the project, High Point Town Center features one of the largest retaining walls in Alabama, containing 30,000 square feet of concrete. A standard shopping center project uses about 15,000 square feet





for retaining walls. Without an extra large retaining wall, the project would have faced great difficulty as the site had many challenges. The site sloped from northwest to southeast. Therefore, a planned pond had to be located on the uphill side of the site.

“Being multi-level and having the pond in the location that the site and layout demanded made it challenging,” said Larry Ingram of Sain & Associates Engineers. “Plus, we had interaction with the existing developments around the property, so there had to be extensive coordination, like tying into their storm system. It’s a real collaborative effort to get the design finalized and plans done within the owner’s budget and the constraints of regulation.”

To best utilize the space on the sloping property, developers chose Contour Inc. from Douglasville, Ga., which specializes in the design-build of fully engineered segmental retaining wall systems and reinforced slopes.

The crosswalks and plaza areas at High Point Town Center featured concrete pavers. Using decorative concrete materials means the finished product is more attractive than a poured-in-place concrete, and the concrete pavers create nicer and longer-lasting pedestrian crosswalks as opposed to paint stripes.

■ by Wendi Lewis



