



MOSAIC APARTMENTS

Metal tiles create eye-catching exterior for new Fargo, N.D. apartment building

If you know the city of Fargo, N.D., only from the 1996 film – or the four-season TV series it inspired – you might not know that the upper Midwest community is one of the fastest-growing in the country. Its population grew almost 20% between 2010 and 2020 – and it's up another 5% since the last census. It's also a city of renters, with more than half of all residents living in rental units.

The combination of these two factors has created a strong multifamily housing market – and a demand among developers to stand out from the crowd. The latter of these certainly was a driver in the design of one recently completed complex that takes its name from the eye-catching exterior created using hundreds of metal tiles.

The Mosaic Apartments features 92 units sized from studios to two bedrooms – and, thanks to the pattern created by all those metal tiles, it's also very aptly named. Designers with the local firm of Stroh Architects & Interiors were looking to create what principal Terry Stroh AIA calls "the jewel of the block," with their plans (though this did put them in some competition with themselves, having just completed a larger apartment building for the same developer across the street). From a design standpoint, he notes, façades often pose the biggest challenge, as there's often a request from developers for a signature look.

"These projects are always hard when it comes to budget and exterior materials," he says. "The apartments on the inside don't really change much from a quality perspective – the exterior is always the hardest to nail down and stay in budget."

Stroh adds that though the client, a local developer, was looking for a standout appearance, there was a bit of persuasion required when presented with the initial drawings and the idea of metal tiles. "We had to convince the client to look at a building in Minneapolis, so they could see for themselves, even though our rendering looked great."

The designers were sure from the start that Petersen's PAC-CLAD Precision Series Cupped Tiles were the right product for the project. The tiles feature a reverse facet to catch light at multiple angles to create a multi-shade effect as viewing perspective changes. More than 37,000 sq. ft. of the material in three finishes – Musket Gray, Slate Gray and Granite – were used in the randomized design. The team also specified an additional 6,500 sq. ft. of Petersen's corrugated 7.2 Exposed Fastener panels in Stone White to create a contrasting feature wall for the interior courtyard, along with 1,421 sq. ft. of Reveal Soffit Panel in Matte Black to call out the building's entry.

Installers with Fargo-based Knoke Seamless Gutters & Siding were an integral part of the design team. In many projects featuring randomized patterns, architects use their modeling software to create the visual arrangement, with clear indications of where each colored tile should be placed. However, Stroh's designers opted to let Knoke's pros do the arranging.

"It was all on us to determine where the tiles went," owner Keith Knoke says, noting the challenges a more directed approach might have posed. "In other projects, they work with modeling programs – these tiles are so small you can't do that. Creating a grid that big would have been obscene. That was one of the most challenging things on this project."

Since its completion, the project has proven to be popular with Fargo's apartment hunters, which has made the building's developers pleased, as well. "The ownership group is very excited," Knoke says, describing the reaction the exterior receives from passers-by, including prospective tenants. "It's bold!" they'll say, which is just what you want for a project like this."

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Petersen, a Carlisle company, manufactures PAC-CLAD architectural metal cladding systems in multiple gauges of steel and aluminum. PAC-CLAD products include hidden- and exposed-fastener wall panels, standing seam roof panels, flush- and reveal-joint wall panels, vented or solid soffit panels, perforated metal, coil and flat sheet, composite panels, column covers, plus fascia and coping. All are available in a Kynar-based 70% PVDF Fluropón coating in 46 standard colors and 16 wood grain finishes that include a 30-year finish warranty. Most colors meet LEED requirements and are rated by the Cool Roof Rating

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Editorial contact:

Rob Heselbarth

847-981-4707

rheselbarth@petersenmail.com