



PRAIRIECARE MEDICAL GROUP

Mental health facility's unique façade offers a welcoming approach

PrairieCare Medical Group isn't your ordinary medical practice. The Minnesota organization specializes in behavioral and mental health services, with an emphasis on children and adolescents. It opened its 10th facility in Rochester, Minn. in late 2019, with a design that's equally unique. A primary emphasis is on providing plentiful natural daylight, which is made evident from the front façade's extensive glazing. To frame the glazing and add some calming counterpoint to that elevation's pattern and color, designers opted for neutral-toned metal flush and relief wall panels installed in a vertical arrangement that echoes the curtain wall's mullions.

This combination of lightness and solidity was on the minds of the project's architects from the beginning. "Throughout the design process, one of our challenges was trying to strike the balance between the need for a safe and secure facility for staff, and providing a warm and welcoming exterior space," says Seth Behrends, AIA, project architect and senior associate with the Minneapolis office of the building's design firm, HGA. He adds that there really wasn't a historical model for the mix of treatment programs PrairieCare planned to run in the building. This, in turn, fostered a collaborative, back-and-forth approach with the client "to provide a custom solution to offer just the right amount of safety and security."

The vertical metal panels are paired with horizontal courses of woodgrain-patterned aluminum panels in a bright terra cotta finish to highlight the two front entrances, with fiber cement panels, also installed horizontally, in a mixed pattern of neutral grays and creams between the two doorways. "We wanted to give the impression of a contemporary, warm, welcoming facility – that it wasn't a building trapped in a historic typology," Behrends says.

For the vertical panels, HGA opted for Petersen's Flush and Reveal Wall Panels, in both 7- and 11-in. widths. The .032-gauge aluminum panels were installed in a double-height arrangement and feature a Weathered Zinc finish. This variety was intended to add visual depth and eliminate any feeling of flatness or thinness.

"We ran through a series of studies looking at different ways to deploy the different widths and how those patterns would transfer from the top portion and bottom portion," Behrends says, explaining how the final pattern came to be. "Ultimately, we landed on a repeat that appeared to be random but could be communicated to the installers. We were able to give them a sample that could be repeated."

Behrends says his team worked through some of the design details in-house and then ran them past both Petersen's experts and the installation pros with Burnsville, Minn.-based Innovative Building Concepts. "We had a couple rounds of shop drawing reviews to be comfortable with the width and edges of the two profiles," he says, noting the collegial effort that prevailed during the project. "Throughout, all parties involved were on a very tight timeframe. It was a very positive, collaborative process, with the contractors and subs and companies like Petersen."

The clock was ticking from the moment HGA started work, with the client having less than a calendar year before their existing lease was set to expire. The aggressive schedule began in January, which ended up being the coldest month in the area in 26 years, while February received the most snow on record. March continued the pattern with the highest rainfall on record. But to Pat Sweeney, Innovative Building Concepts' co-owner and field superintendent, these three months were just par for the course in his home state.

"It's Minnesota, it's winter, you don't like it, wait five minutes and it will be different," he says. "It's crazy the extremes – we go from 30 below to 100-plus."

In the end, the building team, which also included Knutson Construction of Rochester, Minn., met their deadlines and, more importantly, their client's expectations. "We're very pleased with how it came out and the client has been very pleased with the facility," Behrends says. "From a programmatic and design standpoint, all I've heard are very positive things about the project."

Sweeney is in full agreement with this upbeat assessment. "Everybody's happy with it," he says. "That's what we strive for – a happy customer."

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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 Fluoropon 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 Council. Custom colors and weathertightness warranties are offered. BIM and CAD documents are available for most products. Founded in 1965, Petersen's facilities are located in Illinois, Georgia, Texas, Maryland, Arizona and Washington. For information on the complete line of Petersen's PAC-CLAD metal products call 800-PAC-CLAD, visit pac-clad.com or write to info@pac-clad.com.

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