Best Commercial Renovation

Tessa’s Restaurant, Naperville, Ill.

The owners of a small, two-story restaurant in a Chicago suburb wanted to greatly expand the available space to make better use of the facility. But the plan faced key challenges, including a tight site and an original building that was more than 100 years old. To retain the old-time charm while meeting contemporary needs, designers created a total-precast concrete addition that matches well with the original structure.

“You have to look really hard to see where the new precast concrete façade meets the old brick of the original building,” says Jim Bergeron, the restaurant’s owner and the specifier of the precast concrete system. Bergeron had worked with the precaster on an earlier project and had seen its capabilities for replicating brickwork. He worked with his construction manager and the precaster to work out how it could be accomplished. “We saw very early on that it needed to be done with precast.”

The project retained the original 1,700-sq-ft, two-story restaurant space at the front and added a three-story, 7,100-sq-ft space to the back buttered against the original building. The restaurant was gutted to update it and flow the spaces together better, with the need to match the two structures on the outside creating one of the building’s key challenges.

But there were other challenges, too. The building, located in the bustling downtown area of a rapidly expanding area, ran lot line to lot line, with no staging area available. In addition, the construction would require closing the alley behind the site to erect the components for the long and narrow design. Bergeron knew his neighbors would not put up with access being cut off for too long.

“When we considered all the costs, precast concrete made a whole lot of sense.’

“Because of the height, the congestion and the timetable, we looked at many options,” he says. “When we considered all the costs, precast concrete made a whole lot of sense, especially with the way we could match the brick of the existing building.”

The addition features a total-precast concrete structural system of 12-in.-thick exterior walls, 8-in.-thick walls for elevators and stair shafts, spandrels and 8- and 10-in.-thick concrete flooring slabs. The panels were cast with a formliner that replicated the look of weathered brick, and both the existing and new spaces were painted to seamlessly match them in color and texture. A decorative mural completed the look.

PCI Committee’s Comments:

“This project shows how careful attention in both structural and architectural detailing can allow total-precast concrete systems to be used in commercial renovation projects. The results of this design show the potential for projects that want to retain a link to the past while ensuring effective use of the building for many decades to come.”
BEST COMMERCIAL RENOVATION

TESSA'S
Naperville, Ill.

Entrant Firm:
Oppermann Architects, Naperville, Ill.

Engineer:

Owner:
Jim Bergeron, Naperville, Ill.

General Contractor:
Sequoia General Contracting Corp., Montgomery, Ill.

Precaster:
Dukane Precast Inc., Naperville, Ill.

"Erecting the 55 pieces took only 9 days."

September–October 2007