

Vibrant Entertainment Center

Riverside EpiCenter

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By Marcy Marro, Editor
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Seven colors of metal panels highlight all-in-one entertainment center

In an area where there was few entertainment, recreational and health-related resources, Word of Faith Family Worship Cathedral opened the Riverside EpiCenter in Austell, Ga., to promote community involvement and to give individuals and families a variety of entertainment and recreational activities closer to home.

Located across from the church's main entrance and highly visible from Interstate 20, the Riverside Epicenter was completed in November 2013. Designed by Pieper O'Brien Herr Architects, Alpharetta, Ga., the 112,000-square-foot, two-story multipurpose facility is full of amenities, including a gym, track, wellness room, weight room and aerobics room, as well as a full-service health club with a spa, sauna and steam rooms. Additionally, there is a 36-foot rock climbing wall, six-lane bowling alley, 600-seat performing arts theater, a youth center with an arcade and computer stations, recording and dance studios, and a café and food court.

Exterior Expressions

To make the facility more approachable by the community, Charles J. O'Brien III, AIA, president of Pieper O'Brien Herr Architects, says the owner requested the potentially disparate program functions be expressed on the exterior. The architects responded by developing an inspired design that combined the contrasting program requirements into a dynamic building. "From the outset, the architectural team was focused on capturing the vision and energy of the original dream," says O'Brien.



O'Brien says the project was designed three times due to the client finding a better, more visible site. "Each site was very different from access, approach and topography requiring a different entry sequence," he says. "Additionally, with the varying angles, heights and curves, it made it extremely challenging to ensure that all the varied plans and surfaces aligned properly."

The building is conceived as a vibrant modern center that captivates community involvement, engages the youth, and offers an alternative for the individuals and families looking for wholesome entertainment and recreational opportunities. "The final result is a design with very dynamic spaces, interwoven with a variety of textural articulation that stimulates the senses," explains O'Brien. "The design alignment continues as the vibrant exterior expresses the building's interior functions with sensitive respect for human scale. The complementary adjacencies of the performance auditorium and conference center allow for reserved functions with a dedicated pre-function space and entrance while providing direct access for others to the youth, recreation and entertainment areas. Similarly, the configuration also allows for events to flow from the event spaces to the entertainment venues as desired. The design provided crucial solutions to these prime program requirements."



elements were grouped into one facility. As he says, there are few, if any, of these all-in-one entertainment centers in the country.

Colorful Cladding

MillerClapperton Inc., Austell, Ga., fabricated and installed 73,274 square feet of 4-mm Reynobond metal composite material (MCM) with a fire-retardant core from Alcoa Architectural Products, Eastman, Ga., on the west feature wall, elliptical-shaped interior column covers, vestibules and clerestory. The architects chose seven colors for the metal

The variety of diverse program requirements from a performance auditorium to rock climbing, led the architects to use varying façade heights and roofs to help achieve the building's intended result. The roof alone features 14 elevations, and the building's sloping geometry, clean lines and multiple colors create a visually appealing facility. While Pieper O'Brien Herr Architects has experience designing various program elements in several other projects, O'Brien says this was the first time all of these



panels: Cabernet, Light Bronze, Copper Penny, Off White, Pure White, Champagne Metallic and Deep Black. “The readily color palette available for metal panels accentuated our design intent of expressing the varied program to the exterior,” says O’Brien.

Zeke Miller, president of MillerClapperton, says it took six months to fabricate the panels and 10 days to do the install. “Like most projects, the wall cladding is one of the last things to be installed on the building,” he says. “As usual,

the end date was the same, but our start date kept sliding as a result of other trades taking a little more time than they originally expected.”

The superstructure of the center is an all steel frame construction, with the entrance canopy structures using exposed steel construction. Decorative metal panels were used as a ceiling feature in the performance auditorium. “It is a beautiful facility and the panels look great,” says Miller. “The west elevation is very impressive because we have vertical panels that are approximately 16 feet tall that are as flat as they can be.”

Sustainable Design

The \$27.2 million facility is LEED Silver certified. In addition to using low-emitting materials, repurposing and reusing material, and crushing all concrete to form new parking lots, contractors were able to recycle or salvage more than 80 percent of the construction waste. Water-efficient fixtures provide a 35 percent reduction in water use, saving 450,000 gallons of water annually, while energy-efficient HVAC and lighting systems reduce energy costs by 16 percent. And, the building delivers 30 percent more fresh air than required by code. “Sustainable design was a driving force from the project inception,” explains O’Brien. “Daylighting concepts are utilized throughout the facility, especially in the mall circulation, youth center, gym and conference center. The auditorium features a stepped architectural ceiling. Recycled marble plaster walls, terrazzo flooring made from locally available marble chips and low-VOC paints and carpets were utilized. The furniture is covered with selected fabrics producing reduced environmental impact and minimal maintenance.

The innovative use of materials continues with iridescent resin case work, translucent counter tops, dichroic glass films, actual coffee beans encased in resin panels, deep textural cast wall tiles which contrast with interesting wood grain veneers.”

O’Brien says the completed design reinforces a sense of wonder and continued discovery by the occupants, especially the youth. “This youth-focused venue has provided the safe haven and family leisure experience that was desired by the owner at the project inception,” he adds. “The facility’s auditorium and conference facility has created an amazing opportunity for this forgotten community.”