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Architectural Sales cleans up with challenging LEED project

The eight-story, 300,000 square foot office building was no ordinary project for the Architectural Sales Inc. (ASI) of Minnesota team to tackle. The timing of it, the onset of a brutal 2008 winter in the upper Midwest, and the rigorous demands of having to LEED certify 35 different types of carpet and resilient flooring put company president Chuck Tambornino and his team to the test.

The project called for 35 different types of carpet and resilient flooring to be installed as well as 16 types of carpet and resilient base.

"It was a real high visibility job," Tambornino said.

"The time frame given to us to finish the job was certainly aggressive," said Mike Robinson, the field operations manager.



About Architectural Sales of Minnesota

For nearly 50 years, Architectural Sales Inc. (ASI) of Minnesota has served the Twin Cities with a winning combination of extensive product offerings and great depth in its sales and installation teams. "We think our whole business is developing a relationship and then being able to service the customer," said Chuck Tambornino, company president, which he co-owns with his son Mike. The Tambornino's bought a majority interest in the company in 1997 following the retirement of Marv Schenk, who founded the company in 1959.

Architectural Sales' products include carpet tiles, resilient floors, wood floors and raised access floors for general office and computer rooms. The company occupies a 16,000 square foot office/warehouse in New Hope, Minn., near Minneapolis, that allows it to stock and store materials for any size project.

"Lots of companies do things individually," Tambornino said. "We can provide an owner/developer with a full service offering. We have direct buying relationships with suppliers and are able to warehouse these products. We have our own installers, carpenters and floor layers."

Tambornino said his company chose to be a union contractor for many reasons. "For a small company like ours the union provides a human resource function in terms of selecting and managing benefit packages for employees," he said. "It also provides us a source of trained personnel, allowing us to provide not only people who are trained but that have additional training after becoming a journeyman."

He said in this marketplace, "being a union workforce gives us access to what we call the higher quality contractors and the larger, more visible projects."

The company prides itself on high-quality workmanship and effective project management. ASI's work includes:

The Mall of America
The Mayo Clinic
J.C. Penney
Regal Cinema
University of St. Thomas Law School
South St. Paul City Hall
Paul & Sheila Wellstone Foundation
Select Comfort Corp. Headquarters
Black Bear Casino

Architectural Sales Inc. of Minnesota is located at 4550 Quebec Ave. North, Minneapolis, MN. For more information, call 763-533-7852 or visit www.archsalesmn.com.

Here was the setup: Cargill Inc., the rapidly expanding \$88 billion international agricultural giant, contracted with Opus Northwest to develop the Excelsior Crossing complex outside of Minneapolis. The project called for 35 different types of carpet and resilient flooring to be installed as well as 16 types of carpet and resilient base. On most LEED jobs, ASI works with one or two flooring materials, not three dozen. “The difference between this and other projects was really the paperwork. We had a lot of paperwork just for the LEED certification process,” said Paul Dean, project manager for ASI. The installers sorted through the complexity of the paperwork to figure out where each surface would be put down. “There was a lot of paperwork on the front end to make sure everything was right,” Dean said.

Because this was a LEED-certified project, every material used had to be low VOCs. At no time during the five-month project did ASI get called on any improper material. “We went out and found the product that needed to be in there,” Dean said.

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As part of the LEED certification, the company recycled all the carpet scraps. Once the scraps were gathered, they were sent to a warehouse and shipped to carpet manufacturers, who in turn converted the scraps into carpet tiles again.



Tambornino said the bad winter weather did not slow his crews from completing their task. “We were under very tight deadline constraints by the GC, and yet they got the building up in record time,” he said. “We were very proud as a company to have gotten this project completed in a timely manner.”

Perhaps most remarkable was that at the end of the project, ASI had a zero-items punch list, meaning there were no defects on the manufacturer’s products or on the installation itself. “Typically, with such a large project, you might have a few things,” Dean said. “Our installers did a tremendous job. A big factor was that our journeymen on the job site were INSTALL certified.”

ASI had on average five INSTALL certified installers working on the project at any one time. Sometimes the number

was more, sometimes less. Having that manpower ability is one advantage of being staffed by the Twin Cities affiliate of the International Standards and Training Alliance (INSTALL). INSTALL is a career-long training and certification program offered to floor covering installers throughout the United States and Canada through the United Brotherhood of Carpenters. Major mills and manufacturers such as Milliken, Shaw, Pergo, Mohawk, Armstrong and Mannington offer their technical experts to help keep the curriculum current with changing industry trends.

The Minnesota winter delayed some deliveries from the mills, but ASI’s workers were able to work around it and finish the project on time and on budget. “We’re pretty happy with the way it turned out,” Robinson said.