

Winners Showcase Precast's Capabilities



Chuck Merydith
Executive Editor

The winners of this year's 46th annual PCI Design Awards competition comprise innovative projects from throughout North America. These projects were picked from a wealth of entries, many of which had creative designs that are worthy of note. This number of this year's contributions was among the most ever received for the competition.

The projects underlined the variety of reasons why designers specify architectural and structural precast concrete components for their projects. Among those often cited by designers in their entry materials were:

- **Speed of completion:** Designers take advantage of the ability of precast concrete components to be cast under controlled conditions in the plant while site preparation begins. That helps ensure that the shell is erected quickly, giving interior trades faster access. The capability to continue construction through winter weather was often cited.
- **Economy:** Total-precast concrete structures can combine architectural and structural components, lowering costs. Long-term maintenance costs can also be minimized compared with other materials. Bringing the building on-line more quickly means that it can generate revenues sooner.
- **Aesthetic treatments:** Precast concrete can replicate the appearance of stone, granite, and other masonry products and can produce intricate details of all types. Some precasters use formliners to cre-

ate brick looks or embossings.

- **Codes:** Building codes nationwide are being tightened to ensure that buildings meet stricter seismic requirements and can cope with natural disasters such as high winds and wildfires. Designers in turn see the benefits provided by precast concrete's durability and inherent fire resistance.
- **Sustainable design:** Virtually every owner today wants to maximize the building's environmental friendliness. Precast concrete helps reach those goals in a variety of categories, including energy efficiency, waste reduction, and recycled content.
- **Mixed-use capabilities:** To reduce footprints and the heat-island effect, more projects are including parking levels in their structure—and more parking structures are including revenue-generating retail spaces. Precast concrete helps create a fire separation between parking levels and other spaces, and its long-span capability ensures easy adaptability of layouts for all types of tenants.

Precasters continue to refine their techniques and expand their technologies, producing highly engineered products that can be cast to meet specific needs of many types. By bringing the precaster onto the construction team early in the design process, designers ensure that the maximum benefits are achieved. Precast concrete helps reduce costs, speed construction, and enhance aesthetics—the three most important elements when creating any project. ■



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