

HELIX

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Winter 2022-23

Glen-Gery Debuts Inaugural Brick Color of the Year

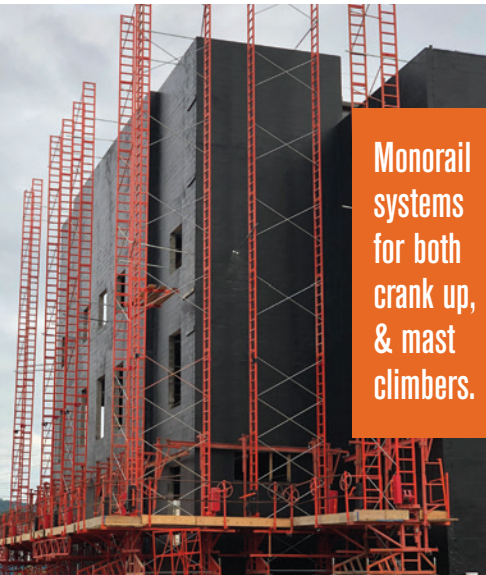
HKS Designs Skyscraper in Austin

The Montrose Collective Celebrates
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Winter 2022

A Message From Our Executive Director: *Mr. Tony Topping*

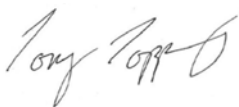
The end of the year is always a great time to look back and reflect on the state of our association and the state of our industry. We started the year with a major goal of putting masonry training back into high schools in Texas, hearing from the various segments of the industry, the consensus we came to was the only way to help solve the ongoing labor shortage crisis is to be in front of the next generation as early as junior high. We need to spend time and resources showing these students that a real career in masonry construction is a top-notch option.

Throughout the year we have had much success in marching toward that goal. Our Regional Masonry Showcase events have become recurring events in each of our regions, and schools look to participate in them every semester. These events have helped convince some schools to begin formal, full-time masonry programs; some of the districts that have already started – or are in the process of starting – full-time masonry programs are Dallas ISD, Grand Prairie ISD, Ferris ISD, Princeton ISD, Red Oak ISD, Aldine ISD, Pasadena ISD, Belton ISD, Copperas Cove ISD, Edinburgh ISD, Harlingen ISD, and others. This list grows every time we are able to get in front of students, teachers, and school administrators. 2022 was truly the year that TMC became a major player in the vocational education world.

As we look forward to 2023, the Texas Masonry Council Board of Directors has new goals and priorities laid out for the year. This upcoming year we shift focus on getting out in front of architects and designers to ensure they understand the benefits of our products. Our new TMC Education Committee will be committed to gathering high-quality Continuing Education content to offer to architects across the state. Our time will also be committed to building relationships with architects and getting them involved in our events and incorporating them into our awards and conventions. The committee and staff will be more active in Texas universities by working with future architects and helping produce valuable research for the construction industry.

As the legislative period comes active again November through Spring, Texas Masonry Staff and industry representatives will be active on the capitol. Texas Masonry in conjunction with the Texas Construction Association will be looking to promote more career technical education funding in the form of grants for schools, worker visa programs, and long-term return the power of specified materials to cities across the state of Texas.

Finally, I want to thank the TMC full-time staff for their hard work and commitment to the industry. Texas is a very large state, and that means we are out helping the industry in all regions. The travel and time away from home can be tough, but the staff has done a fantastic job this year executing events that have impacted the industry in a positive way.



INTRODUCING

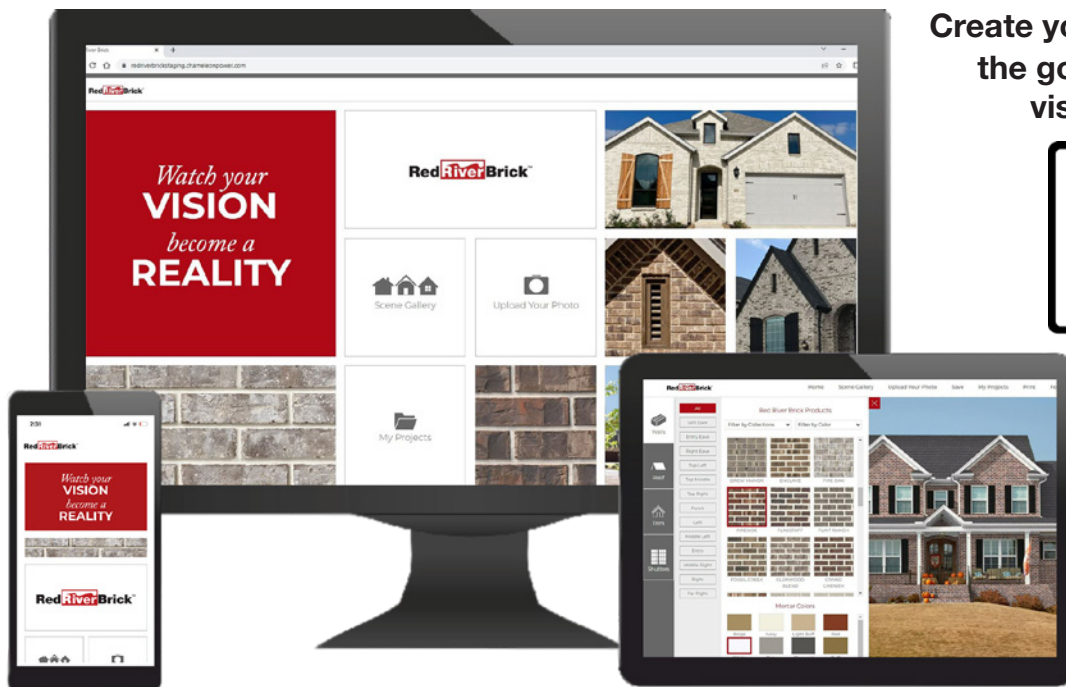
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Glen-Gery Debuts Inaugural Brick Color of the Year with Pitt Café Series

Words and Photos: Glen-Gery

Glen-Gery, one of North America's oldest brick manufacturers and a Brickworks North American company, announced the debut of its inaugural Brick Color of the Year for 2023 with its Pitt Café Series, drawing inspiration from 2023's nature-inspired color and design trends that embody warmth, coziness and texture.

"The New Year will be characterized with warm earth tones; impactful yet authentic textures and finishes; and blushing pops of color," said Denise Smith, marketing manager for Glen-Gery. "As a premier brand, Glen-Gery is constantly monitoring and evaluating current and forthcoming trends, which is why we're thrilled to debut our first-ever Brick Color of the Year that applies the trends we're seeing from fashion and home decor to a new building medium."

Available now for purchase, the Pitt Cafe Series features four colors that are new to Glen-Gery, ranging from creamy whites to earth tones and brown-gray hues. They include:

"Homeowners can bring the aroma of their favorite café into their own homes, invoking a feeling of hygge, warmth and coziness," said Smith. "The series offers a menu of soft, neutral-toned bricks brewed to resemble the world's favorite, comforting beverages."

Used for both interior and exterior applications, brick is a popular building product due to its unique ability to balance form and function. As a building medium, homeowners benefit from its versatility, timelessness and character as well as its durability, sustainability and low-maintenance qualities.

The forthcoming Pitt Cafe Series will join the more than 600 brick and stone products offered by Glen-Gery in order to give architects, builders and homeowners endless design possibilities while remaining style-forward.

Earl Gray:



Irish Creme:



Americano:



Cafe Breve:



HKS Designs Skyscraper in Austin, Set to Become the Tallest Residential Tower in the USA, Outside of New York

Written by Paula Cano

Austin-based office HKS announced the design of the Wilson Tower, a high-rise of 315 meters in Texas' capital featuring 80 floors, 450 units, outdoor terraces, and gardens. The tower will be delivered in collaboration with Britt Design Group and Wilson Capital, and is expected to break ground in the summer of 2023. After completion will become the tallest residential tower in the USA outside of New York.

Austin, nicknamed "Silicon Hills" in reference to California's "Silicon Valley," has become the newest cluster of high-tech and startup activity in the USA. Home to the recently opened Tesla Gigafactory and other giants such as Google and Microsoft, Texas' capital is defining the "City of Business" for its low cost of living (relative to the San Francisco Bay Area), business-friendly environment, and eclectic culture. Nevertheless, the city is facing a housing crisis parallel with its rapid growth. This situation has led companies to see the hilly city as the new construction hub in the country, including ICON and BIG – Bjarke Ingels Group with a 3D-printed 100-house community, Kohn Pedersen Fox (KPF) 's 311-meter high Waterline Tower in Austin's downtown, and HKS with the new Texas' tallest residential building.

The high-rise multifamily building will be located in the heart of downtown Austin near the University of Texas at Austin, the historic 6th Street Entertainment District, Austin Convention Center, and CapMetro's new Downtown Light Rail Station. As part of the city's tremendous redevelopment, the Wilson Tower will have an extension of 0.8 acres and span a half-city block replacing the Avenue Lofts, an Art Deco-style building from 1943.

The tower will be wrapped in a brise soleil that offers protection from the hot Texas sun and wind while providing structural strength. This brise so



Tower rendering by HKS

leil gives the building uniquely shaded and comfortable outdoor living spaces on every level.

In addition to welcoming outdoor terraces and gardens, the project will feature unobstructed skyline views, a signature ground-floor restaurant, and four full floors of amenities, including an expansive pool deck and full-service fitness and wellness center, movie theater, coworking spaces, and a floor dedicated to pets.

HKS, in collaboration with landscape designer Hood Design Studio, has also been selected to design a new creative campus in the heart of Hollywood. Dubbed CMNTY Culture Campus, the project will feature production spaces, offices, and performance venues, bringing together creative industries in a 500,000-square-foot development.

Collective Efforts:

The Montrose Collective celebrates the eclectic and inclusive spirit of its Houston neighborhood.

Written by Ross Weinart, photo by Chase Daniel

Along Westheimer Road, between the Montrose and Midtown neighborhoods, sidewalks directly abut the street's narrow lanes of traffic. A six-inch curb offers the only separation between pedestrians and oncoming vehicles. Curb cuts pierce what little protection those curbs offer, generating a relationship between pedestrians and vehicles that feels treacherous.

Montrose Collective, designed by Michael Hsu Office of Architecture, is comprised of two structures — Building A (184,232 gsf) and Building B (19,542 gsf). Building A replaces a two-story strip mall and double-loaded parking lot separating the building from the street and sidewalk — a relatively common typology among the previous generation of commercial buildings that line Westheimer. In this project, the architects flip that relationship, opting for a combination of business in the front and parking in the back.

The new orientation enables the building and landscape to conspire in creating an environment that feels safe and comfortable to explore on foot. Rather than asking pedestrians to rely on a six-inch curb and a lot of faith, the landscape provides them with comfort and protection. The sidewalks ramp up gradually so that much of the path feels like a refuge elevated above the oncoming traffic, and a wide band of trees and planting beds offer a barrier that feels significant.

Hospitality and retail spaces are located on the bottom floors and commercial offices fill the spaces above. These programs come together in a building that offers a nudge in the direction of

increased density without disregarding the scale of the residential neighborhood it borders. The Montrose neighborhood, from which the building derives its name, has historically served as the center of Houston's LGBTQ+ community and currently is home to an eclectic combination of unique shops, restaurants, and night spots. The design of Montrose Collective echoes this atmosphere, with an inclusive attitude toward materials and details.

Elements of the design feel playfully rebellious. In some cases, brick walls turn a corner with a soft radius; in others, the brick turns the corner at a right angle, but instead of one sharp edge, it offers three. Materials transition from brick, to wood, to rounded shingles, with colorful storefronts mismatched in a way that manages to feel earnest.

This combination of features would make a rationalist cringe, yet the building successfully manages to pull off this complexity with style. The coordination of those diverse moves might have been finicky and carefully curated — or whimsical and carefree; it's hard to tell. However, the assertion by Michael Hsu, FAIA, that “we want everything to be done right and done well, but we also don't treat everything as so precious” suggests the latter. The design embraces difference and demonstrates its unique personality, coming across as quietly cool, confident, and unapologetic.

That confidence and sense of cool likely results from the spatial depth that it offers. While it's common for commercial buildings to gesture toward depth with shallow balconies and subtle recesses, it's rare that they provide the degree of spa-

tial relief that becomes inhabitable. At Montrose Collective, that commitment to depth is fully realized. It's a credit to the developer, Radom Capital, that they were willing to sacrifice leasable square footage in the name of generous public spaces. Steve Radom describes his company as one that is passionate about delivering community-enhancing projects. That commitment is evident in the public spaces provided and demonstrates a refreshing shift in value from the quantitative to the qualitative.

Where the building does push against its setbacks, dark iron-spotted brick provides a rough outer shell, but the massing rarely meets that perimeter. Volumes are carved away, providing recessed outdoor spaces along the building's edges. At the upper levels, those recesses serve as generous balconies, walkways, and gardens. Along the ground level, covered spaces work in collaboration with landscape elements, angling subtly to draw visitors into the public space at the core of the site.

The building clings closest to the street at the southern face that runs along Westheimer Road, a busy thoroughfare with steady traffic. At the ground level, the facade withdraws into the volume of the building, providing covered space for a cafe. Storefronts, a planted wall, and a collage of materials provide textural variety at street level. At the upper levels,

the brick facade peels back at moments, revealing wood soffits that hint at the character of the spaces within.

While the south face presents a more solid facade to the busy street, the east and west sides open expansively to the smaller, neighborhood-scale streets of Grant and Crocker. Along Grant Street, the recessed spaces along the edge of the ground floor carve deeper at the center of the site, creating a threshold that leads to a covered exterior space at the heart of the building. That covered space gives way to a generous pedestrian passage that opens to the sky before connecting to Crocker Street on the east side of the block. These measures help the building successfully mediate between the heavy



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Location:

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Client:

Radom Capital

Architect:

**Michael Hsu Office of
Architecture**

Contractor:

Harvey Builders

Structural Engineer:

HOK

MEP Engineer:

DBR

Civil Engineer:

Kimley-Horn

LEED Consultant:

Paladino

Parking Consultant:

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Landscape Architect:

Office of James Burnett

Graphics:

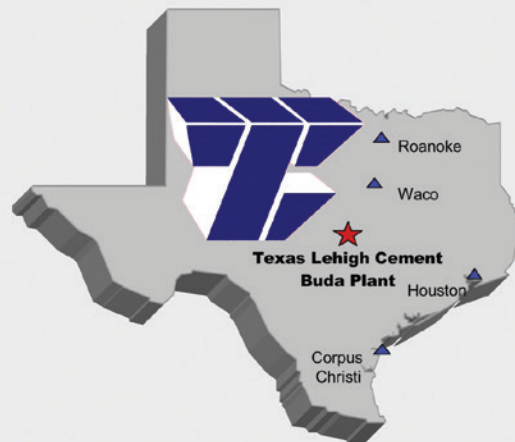
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traffic of Westheimer and the residential scale of the surrounding neighborhood.

The spirited nature that the building alludes to along its public faces becomes more animated and vibrant at the core of the site. The warm wood cladding that was limited to the soffits along the perimeter becomes the dominant material, covering the walls and the ceiling of the covered deck. In addition to the wood, a collage of rounded masonry shingles, splashes of color, and white brick laid in a variety of patterns clad the walls of the core, providing identity to the tenants

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that line the covered walkways.

From this core, a series of staircases wrapped in glossy green tile rise to connect the ground plane to the various decks and terraces at the levels above. In describing the approach to these spaces, Hsu states: “We try to embrace vertical circulation and treat it as a ground plane experience. Instead of it being an expediency, it should be experiential.” The staircases connect a series of spatially diverse moments that unwind gradually. At each landing, new destinations present themselves. A few paths lead to apparent dead ends, but even those spaces feel as though they are only a cafe table away from being someone’s favorite space in which to quietly read a book.

Within these central spaces, the lighting and landscape play roles as important as the architecture. Artists were commissioned to design site-specific light features as well as the white graphic that floats along the ceiling and wraps up the east facade. At the ground level, the landscape designed by the Office of James Burnett contributes to the liveliness of the spaces: Elliptical beds of native plants break up the red brick and patterned tile of the walkways, while a series of cypress trees keep outdoor spaces comfortable during Houston’s summers. The green tile that clads the stairs feels like a placeholder for vines and hanging plants that will eventually take it over.

The north end of the site cleverly conceals the building’s parking garage, sandwiching it between the warehouse-like office spaces above and the boutique storefronts that line the sidewalks below. The multistory parking garage hides behind chain-link panels threaded with pink and white plastic strips. These panels stack like loose blocks with a pattern of fragmented curves and angles that serves to break up the scale of the parking structure. (It’s a bit unfortunate that this pattern doesn’t continue to the facade that faces the houses to the north.)

Parking in Houston isn’t going away, but the building demonstrates that it can be concentrated and

consolidated. The garage signals that the city may not be over its addiction to cars, but at least it’s willing to seek help. The playful nature of the Montrose Collective suggests that this transition might even be fun, and this may be where its greatest contribution to the neighborhood lies. As cool as the building feels, perhaps its biggest impact isn’t about style but about the precedent it sets for the city’s future.

The entire block currently feels like a small oasis, but it also signal where the neighborhood is headed. Nearby residential towers and plans for a mixed-use development by another prominent designer a few blocks away suggest that the transition to a more walkable neighborhood is more than a trend. While future buildings along Westheimer may not be as materially stylish and future developers may not be as generous with their real estate, this design possesses the potential to be transformative at an urban scale. As Hsu modestly states, “It’s just one block, but I feel like little seeds like this are important.”

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Warming Up with Outdoor Fireplaces

Words and Photos: Joe Raboine, Director of Residential Hardscapes, Belgard

It's no surprise that fire features – like fire pits, fireplaces, and fire tables – are among the most popular outdoor living accessories. Fire has long offered us a sense of comfort and peace, from the earliest days of humanity to our modern-day outdoor living spaces. Sitting around a crackling fire is proven to be relaxing, with studies showing it can reduce anxiety and stress.

As temperatures cool down, your customers will be taking full advantage of their fire features so they can maximize their time outdoors. Fire features serve as a source of both heat and light, which is beneficial as daylight hours decrease and temperatures drop. They also are an amazing centerpiece for a beautiful outdoor room. All these factors make them an effortless selling point for your client base.

With changes in products, styles and trends, fire pits and features no longer have a standard look or shape. You can elevate your clients' backyards using modular design styles and geometric shapes and patterns, which align well with the modern design that's popular today.

Here are a few tips and considerations to remember as clients approach you to create new fire features this season.

Eye for Design

While round fire pits are still a common and popular fixture, we have more products and design tools available today to construct more contemporary, elaborate fire features, as well as sell additional elements for added flair.

Linear, rectangular fireplaces and fire tables are becoming increasingly popular and give an outdoor space a more unique edge. This more modern take on the fire pit can be applied in casual backyard settings or more formal gathering areas. You also can add extra fire (or fire and water) elements like fire bowls for a more dramatic effect. Fire bowls also are a great option when working with microspaces, in which clients don't have ample yard space for the full fire pit with supplemental seating.

Mix It Up with Unique Materials

As demonstrated by the array of designs we can now create, you also can incorporate different materials into fire features to make them as unique as your client. Pavers are always a top choice as your base material, given their durability and ability to handle high temperatures, but consider additional elements or textures to make your client's outdoor space truly stunning.

There are many paver styles available today that have a natural stone finish and texture that offer an organic look and feel. Paired with smoother, linear pavers, this delivers a beautiful level of contrast. You also can mix and match complementing or contrasting color palettes for more dimension – such as deep charcoal with lighter gray tones.

You also can incorporate natural stone boulders for more biophilic design styles. Paired with earth-tone pavers with rougher edges and textures, this offers a very natural feel.

Winter Maintenance

In addition to offering guidance on design, make sure to share maintenance tips so clients can keep their fire features looking and working great year-round.

When fire pits aren't in use, it's best practice to apply a cover, as this will help deter snow and ice buildup. This is especially important if the fireplace or fire pit uses gas or ceramic logs. Proper installation and maintenance ensure their fire feature will stay beautiful and functional every season.

Record Participation

The North and South Texas SPECMIX Bricklayer 500 Jr. had record attendance this fall with over 16 high school and apprentice students competing!

Ag & Construction Teacher, Steven Noll said this:

Medina Valley High School competed in the SPECMIX Bricklayer 500 Jr. on November 3rd. Mason: Emiliano Aguilar along with Tender: Felix Bernal, competed against 11 other teams. Emiliano and Felix laid 80 bricks in 20 minutes. They placed 3rd overall competing against other high schools masonry programs from South Texas. Emiliano received masonry tools and \$100 for his efforts. Congratulations guys!



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Dennis Knautz, President and CEO of Acme Brick Company Announces Retirement After Over 40 Years of Service.

Dennis Knautz (L.), retiring President and CEO of Acme Brick Company is shown with Ed Watson, Acme's current Vice President – Operations who will assume the title of President and CEO on April 1, 2023.

Dennis Knautz has announced his retirement as President and CEO of Acme Brick Company effective March 2023-bringing to a close a career that has spanned more than 40 years.

Dennis joined Acme as Controller, was promoted to Vice President- Finance in 1988 and served in that position until 2000. He became Executive Vice President and COO in 2004 and in 2005 was named Acme's eleventh President and CEO. He is among the longest serving Presidents in Acme's 131-year history.

Ed Watson, Acme's Executive Vice President – Operations will become President and CEO effective April 1, 2023.

Of Dennis Knautz, Watson said, "We have been privileged to have had Dennis's leadership at Acme and the brick industry both locally and nationally, during one of the most challenging periods in the history of the homebuilding industry. Thankfully, we are a sound, well-managed company today because of Dennis' dedication to Acme, our customers, and to our associates.

Dennis enhances every organization in which he is involved. I can truly say that Dennis is a terrific leader, a great boss, a good friend, a devoted family man, and a wonderful person."

Under Dennis' leadership Acme led the nation in brick shipments for many years, delivering more than

32 billion bricks to residential and commercial customers over that time. He also expanded Acme's community engagement with many organizations including the Texas Association of Business, the North Texas Commission, and North Texas LEAD (Leaders and Executives Advocating Diversity). In 2016, he accepted, on Acme's behalf, the Fort Worth Chamber's "Spirit of Enterprise" award. Nationally, he was inducted into the Brickman's hall of Fame in 2019 and has also played a vital role in the Brick Industry Association, twice serving as its Chairman, and being recognized with its Lifetime Achievement Award in 2020.

Ed Watson will bring a wealth of experience to his new position as the next President and CEO. He will soon be celebrating his 40th year with Acme Brick, previously serving in the roles of Vice President-Production, General Production Manager –Concrete Operations, Regional Manager-Featherlite Building products, General Manager – Texas Quarries and Plant Engineer – Featherlite Building products.

"Ed is a personable and engaging leader who has proven to be an outstanding manager, Dennis Knautz said. His leadership and motivational skills will now be used in all areas of Acme. I have every confidence that he will continue Acme's long-standing commitment to excellence in this newly expanded role."

Acme Brick Company, founded in 1891, sells building material and design products for the home and commercial projects through over 50 Acme Brick Tile & Stone public showrooms across 13 states in the Southwest and Southeast. Acme is an owned subsidiary of Berkshire Hathaway, Inc. For more information visit brick.com. For more PRESS information contact: Ron Taylor/Ashley & Taylor Public Relations (817) 874-8206 or ashleytaylorpr@gmail.com.

HBI: SLOWDOWN IN HOUSING WILL NOT SOLVE CONSTRUCTION WORKER SHORTAGE

By Vincent Salandro

According to the Fall 2022 HBI Construction Labor Market Report, the industry still needs 2.2 million additional net hires by 2024.

The softening of the U.S. housing market means short-term demand for construction labor will likely also soften, according to a new report from the Home Builders Institute (HBI). As part of the Fall 2022 HBI Construction Labor Market Report, the estimated number of construction worker growth required for the sector is approximately 740,000. This estimate is level with the figure from the organization's Spring 2022 report. Additionally, from 2022 to 2024, the construction industry will need an additional 2.2 million net hires.

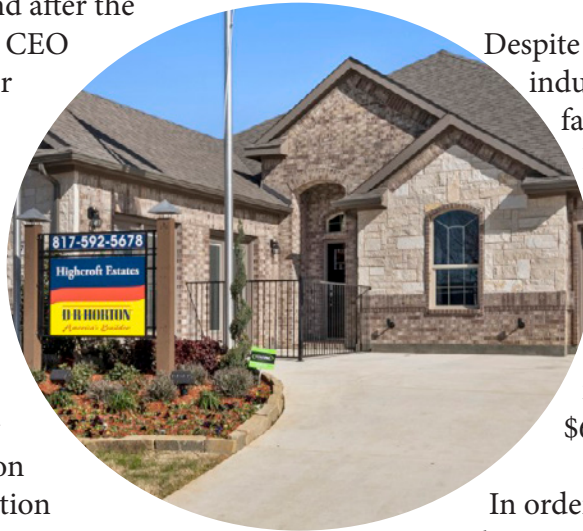
“While housing demand will slow during a downturn, there will remain a severe shortage of skilled construction workers now and after the economy recovers,” says HBI CEO Ed Brady. “That is because for many decades our country has not encouraged enough young people and others to consider careers in construction.”

According to the report, economists estimate the U.S. faces a shortage of homes for sale or rent of at least 1 million units, with a lack of construction labor a key limiting factor for improving both housing inventory and affordability. In recent months, the number of open, unfilled jobs in the overall construction industry totals between 300,000 and 400,000 positions. While the count is slowing as home building activity decreases due to higher interest rates, the HBI forecasts the nation will require additional construction workers to reduce the existing housing deficit.

According to the report, women make up a growing share of construction employment, reaching a new record high of 11% in 2021, a 1.9% increase in share since 2017. The median age of construction workers is 41;

however, the share of construction workers in the 25 to 54 age cohort has been steadily declining over time due to aging trends. Hispanic workers account for nearly a third of the construction labor force and immigrant workers account for roughly a quarter of the construction workforce, according to the HBI.

“Over the long run, additional residential supply must be added. For construction to expand further, more workers must be recruited and trained for the construction sector,” says Brady. “Put simply, a housing downturn won't solve the nation's crisis level shortage of skilled workers for home building.”



Despite ongoing labor shortages in the industry, construction wages compare favorably with the overall economy. Half of payroll workers in construction earn more than \$49,070 annually, compared with the U.S. median wage of \$45,760. The top 25% in the construction industry earn at least \$75,820, while the top quartile in the overall economy earns at least \$68,590.

In order to mitigate the labor shortage, the HBI has stressed the importance of appealing to middle school and high school students to help create a young, more diverse construction workforce and combat the aging trends at play in the industry. The institute says it is important for the industry to work closely with unions to train and place thousands more in the skilled trades. The HBI recently opened a BuildStrong Academy in Houston, which will provide tuition-free training to individuals interested in pursuing a career in the trades. The HBI operates similar academies in Denver, New Orleans, and Orlando, Florida. The HBI has pledged to open 15 additional academies by 2027.

TMC New Members

C | P | H

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Nacogdoches High School students learn masonry with special training

By Avery Gorman - KLTU Channel 7 an ABC Affiliate

NACOGDOCHES, Texas (KTRE) - When it comes to higher education, students are increasingly considering trade schools as well as college. Federal data shows more than 90% of trade school apprentices start out averaging a salary of \$77,000. Couple that with the cost of tuition often being a fourth the cost of college, and it's an easy decision for many.

The Texas Masonry Council stopped by Nacogdoches High School today to teach students how to mix mortar, spread mud, lay bricks and build scaffolding.

Tradesman Reid Perry is an alumni from NHS and was asked by Texas Masonry to come back to his hometown to teach the students this trade.

"This that TMC is doing now is really important for the younger generation," Perry said. "It's a trade where a kid can make a lot of money and doesn't need to go to college to do it."

TMC created different stations for students to travel around and learn each of the trades.

Professional tradesmen were there to instruct students on how to perform a task, and then students had hands-on experience doing the trade.

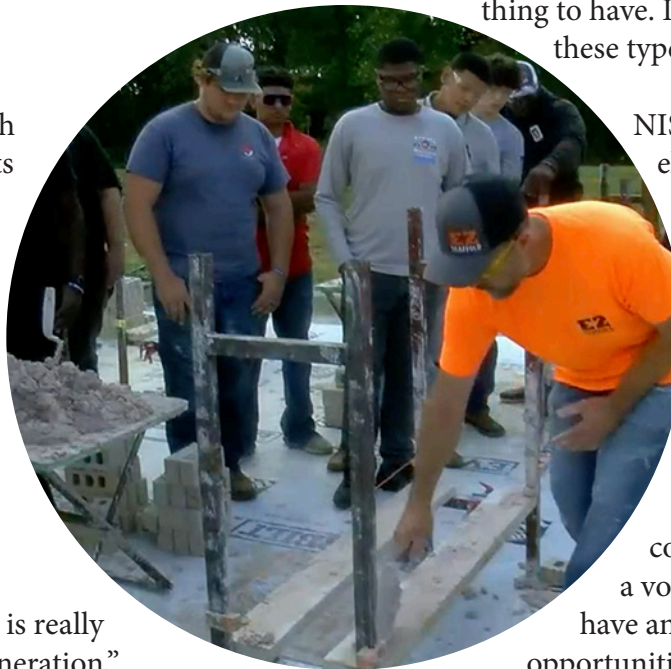
Benjamin Knepp, a junior at NHS, said this is something they don't do every day.

"Between the different CTE programs, we get to work with, like, engineering and woodworking and construction generally at school, but we don't have the means to learn or to do brick laying, so this was a neat opportunity to get to learn from

professionals," Knepp said.

Junior Jason Macias said he's thankful for this opportunity to learn.

"Saying that we were able to have these opportunities to get these hands-on experiences is a really nice thing to have. It is best to just take part in these types of events," Macias said.



NISD Superintendent Gabriel Trujillo said they have a college career and military readiness program in their district.

"It's just an exploration of what intices our students," Trujillo said. "Not every student wants to go in a direction of university or college. They want to go into a vocational or a trade. So, we have an obligation to provide these opportunities to our students."

Trujillo also said they used today to gauge the students' interest in masonry and to see if the district should add this trade to their programs.



Students lay brick with supervision of local contractor Olvera Masonry Services, LLC.

www.texasmasonrycouncil.org

Rice University's Sid Richardson Residential College by Barkow Leibinger

By Mark Lamster

If you were to construct a giant dome over the Houston campus of Rice University, you'd have a pretty good museum of architectural movements over the last century. The school, which was founded in 1912, has been a patron of ambitious architecture from the start, with its very first buildings, designed by Ralph Adams Cram, a sui generis mashup of historic styles. Recent projects by Michael Maltzan, KieranTimberlake, and Rogers Partners join a legacy of name-brand architecture.

The latest addition to this tradition comes from the German-American firm Barkow Leibinger. "Rice is kind of an incubator for architecture," says Frank Barkow, a founding partner. The firm's 148,000-square-foot Sid Richardson residential college, completed earlier this year, is a trio of linked structures (two, five, and 12 stories) that sits alongside the building it was commissioned to replace, a 14-story Brutalist tower designed by the Houston firm Neuhaus & Taylor, which opened in 1971. The future of this decommissioned tower is undetermined, though Barkow would like to see it repurposed. "Our building is very much in dialogue with it," he says, noting that the new college structure wraps around it on two sides. "It would be my hope to save it."

The new complex deftly negotiates the relationship between the bucolic Rice campus, with its broad quads lined by arcades and shaded allées of live oaks, and the towers of Houston's Medical District, directly across Main Street. It manages this in both scale, with its structures stepping down in height, and in plan, by rotating away from the grid of the city and toward the grid of the campus.

It also makes subtle reference to the architectural legacy of the school; its interlocking volumes, with punched windows aligned in orderly formation, nod to the modernist tradition on campus,

while its complex brickwork looks back to its earliest buildings and to its many Postmodern additions, in particular works by James Stirling and Michael Graves. It is nonetheless decidedly of this moment, free of flashy formalism and confident in its reserved modernism.

Like much of the architecture at Rice, "Sid Rich," as it is known (it is named for the legendary Texas oil baron and philanthropist Sid Richardson, who was not an alum), is faced in warm St. Joe brick from New Orleans. But this was not the original intention. The project's genesis came in 2017, when Barkow ran into Sarah Whiting—then the dean of Rice's architecture school and now dean of Harvard's GSD—at the Chicago Architecture Biennial. Whiting envisioned the new Sid Rich as a pilot project in mass timber, and invited Barkow Leibinger to submit for the job. The firm won the commission but, as it turned out, Houston's building code precluded a mass timber building of 12 stories, and the idea was scrapped in favor of a concrete post-and-beam system faced with the traditional brick.

There is little that is conventional about those brick facades, however. They are articulated by alternating sections with distinct arrangements in a range of complementary colors—rose, red, orange, and gray. Zigzag and sawtooth patterns are more dramatic at the lower levels and then flatten out at higher elevations.



*“We have good masons
in Texas, so we took
advantage.”*

- Barkow Leibinger

“We spent a lot of time working out the brick modules so there would be as little cutting as possible,” says Barkow. The masonry was laid on-site and not prefabricated in panels. “We have good masons in Texas, so we took advantage.”

The facades shield a cavity wall and a sandwich of flashing and insulation, with a plywood layer and dry-wall interior face. A ceramic brise-soleil of vertical fins provides shading to glass-fronted common areas on the lower levels of the complex, adding definition to the exterior while subtly modulating the light within.

The goal is for the college to achieve a LEED Silver standard, though Rice did not require certification. Elements contributing to the building’s sustainability include photovoltaic arrays on roofs, rainwater collection, and the use of shaded arcades for circulation, in keeping with Rice tradition.

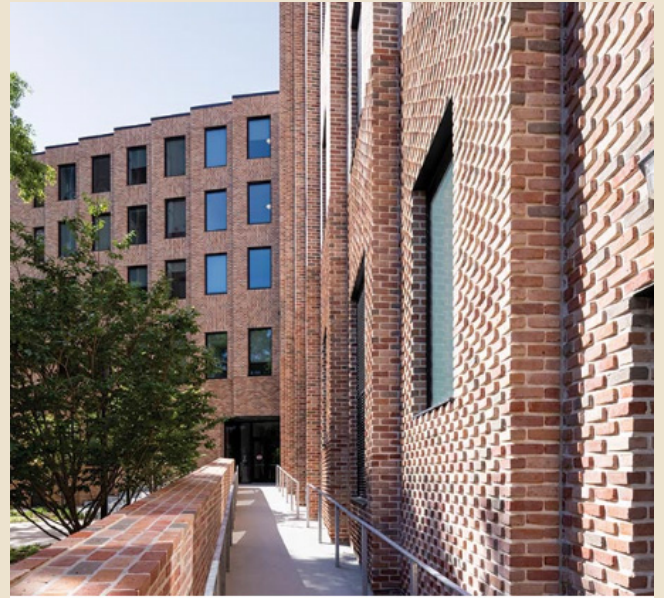
The complex’s most architecturally dynamic interiors are the common areas that link the three buildings at their lower level, in particular the dining hall—a 300-seat space defined by a triangulated grid of concrete columns and exposed ceiling beams. A lattice of wood slats between the concrete beams provides acoustical dampening and is equipped with strip lighting set slightly askew to create a bit of visual play. The result is dramatic but also warmly inviting.

The college provides “Sidizens” with 97 double units (each with its own bathroom) and 118 singles (which share common bathrooms), the dining hall, a duplex magister’s apartment, and three apartments for advisors.

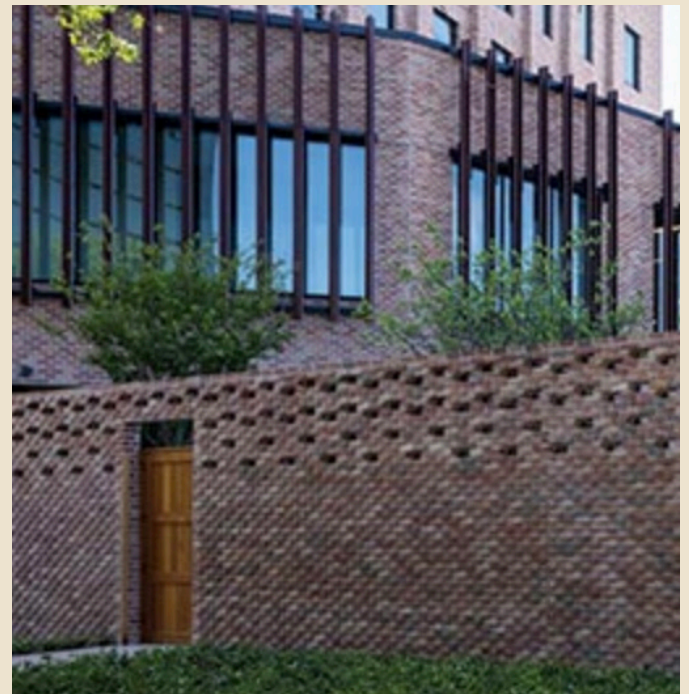
While the 12- and five-story structures are predominantly residential, the two-story building houses workshops and makerspaces, with a roof terrace that serves as a central social space for the college. It is shaded by a space-frame pergola of blackened

steel, with slats in fan formation, its language borrowed from the concrete frame of the lower levels.

Pleased with the results at Sid Richardson, Rice has commissioned Barkow Leibinger to expand a second residential college—one of the school’s first, Hanszen—designed as part of Cram’s original plan for the campus. That will present a challenge different from Richardson’s Brutalist legacy, but, this time, without a tower in play, the firm will have a chance to build in mass timber.



The unique brick design displayed along the buildings and courtyard of the building; the quality of craftsmanship on full display.



Construction Law



Knowledge is Power

Spike Cutler

Attorney Spike Cutler, and the firm of Cutler-Smith, P.C., are staunch advocates for the rights and interests of construction trade contractors. Cutler provides legal counsel to a number of trade organizations, including the Independent Electrical Contractors (IEC) of Texas, IEC- Dallas, IEC – Fort Worth, the Subcontractors Association of the Metroplex ("SAM"), the Texas Masonry Council, the United Masonry Contractors Association of DFW, and the North Texas Stone Fabricators Association. He is also a member of the Attorneys Council of the National Subcontractors Alliance.

Knowledge is Power

You know your craft, and you know it well. You know what its costs to do the work, and you know how to manage and finish it when you've won the job. So, why is it that some jobs end up being profitable, and others complete duds? From decades in this game, I contend it's not just what you know – it's when you know it!

Unfortunately, bad projects don't have a "Keep Away" sign on them when you bid them, but there are signs you can watch for, before and during the project. These are key considerations that, well-tended, can help you avoid the courthouse, and win if you end up there anyway.

The Project

You can tell a lot about a project's prospects for success from the plans and specifications. Are they well-coordinated, logical, with details that are consistent with the design and your special scope? Pay particular attention to details relating to openings and water/moisture control. Flashings, moisture proofing and window details are hotspots for trouble. For projects that end up in litigation, we often see poor coordination of waterproofing details, and if the design is ambiguous or (worse) appears poorly crafted, you must ask for clarification as to the design intent. Under Texas' new legislative construct (see the article in the last issue of *The Line* for more details), you can gain valuable legal protection from the consequences of a bad design, but only if you notify the project team when you see what you believe to be a defective design. Pre-bid, this means a timely RFI with reasonable detail as to what you're seeing – and a deficient response could be your opportunity to avoid even bidding a problem-prone project.

The Owner

Understanding who the GCs are bidding to with your numbers can help you control a substantial risk vector. For private projects, try to learn as much as you can about the Owner's ability and willingness to pay for the work. Is the Owner an entity associated with a known developer whose reputation for solvency and fair dealing is established? If so, are they Good Guys (have the money, pay on time, respond well to design questions and Change Requests) or Bad Guys (opaque funding arrangements, always 90-days on the money and slow-roll Change Requests)? If you've never heard of the development/ownership group, be a little bit wary, because we are having lots of new out of state entrants to our market – because, you know, here is the best place to be! You might consider asking the GCs to whom you are bidding whether they've gotten the basic Project Funding information set forth in the Chapter 56, Texas Business & Commerce Code from the project's Owner. That information can give you a good idea of the project's financial prospects, as well as the Owner and Contractor's openness about project funding; a quick and complete response is a marker of legitimacy. And, as always, don't forget – is the "private" project being built on land leased from a public owner? If so, you'll have limited recourse under the mechanics' lien law, because a failing or defaulting owner's lease will simply be terminated, and the contracting team left high and dry [as this is written, this author just sent a \$2.5M lien notice on such a project – and the Owner has announced a bankruptcy! And that's just one trade!].

Public projects are likely to be funded, and the allocation of public funds made a public record – but just because a

project is public, doesn't mean it will be easy. Some public owners are responsible and responsive in their administration of the projects funded with taxpayer money, and others appear to believe they're helping their taxpayers by sticking it to the construction team (hint: they aren't!). If the public Owner is known for poor payment practices and worse administration (especially changes and extras), adjust your price accordingly.

The Contractor

You all have contractors you deal with whom you know to be fair operators, and others whose practices seem better-suited to back-street bazaars in third-world countries. You may have to bid to some of the less-savory operators, but if you do, include a solid risk margin in your price. Amazingly, some subs have told me that they thought they had to give the same price to every GC bidding a project – and that just ain't so, nor should it be.

Does the GC have solid project management skills, or is every project a “build it yourself kit”? Does their field management actively engage, staying apprised of project conditions and communicating with the trades, or are they “trailer rats”? If they can't manage a project, administer a schedule, no matter how much profit you built in, you'll lose money.

Do they allow reasonable negotiation of terms on their subcontract, or do they expect you to assume all the risk of loss on the project (that you're financing)? If a GC insists upon unfair terms, terms that place the risk of losses they or their other trades caused onto your shoulders, why should you expect them to behave fairly when trouble erupts? Odds are, they won't.

Qualify Your Bid!

No matter how warm and fuzzy you feel about the Owner and the GC, be incredibly detailed in qualifying your bid – incorporate a detailed list of inclusions and exclusions and make clear that you are never agreeing to provide anything that is not specifically provided as an “inclusion” in your bid. If your specificity is a problem up front, you will be clearing-up something that inevitably would be a bigger problem later.

Own the Project Facts

What do I mean here? During the project – and I mean the entire project, not just when your work is under way – you should be at the jobsite, reviewing and photographing conditions and progress for every trade. With this kind of attention (easy to do in this day and age of cellphone cameras and electronic project records), you'll be well-equipped to (1) spot trouble (whether schedule, field

conditions or scope) in time to address and avoid it, (2) give timely notice to the GC's project management team of problems you've spotted, and (3) largely insulate yourself from liability – and this means liability for project progress and management issues during the job, and quite possibly, liability for alleged construction defects years later! In this case, an ounce of protection beats a metric ton of cure!

Preserve Your Information

Keep all your project files for at least as long as the Statute of Repose – ten years for most Texas projects – but really, keep them for at least twelve years after completion. And be certain your project records are stored in a useful and non-destructive way (not in that 135-degree attic!). Detailed project records, especially photographs and as-built documents), could be your “get out of jail free” card when (not if, but when) you get sued for alleged construction defects.

You shouldn't have to practice “defensive construction” – but you do. Implement a comprehensive plan for logically gathering and preserving information throughout the life cycle of every project, and you'll discover that (1) the process helps you to spot a lot of potential trouble before it becomes actual trouble, and (2) you're better suited to win when trouble tracks you down. We're happy to help you work on project documentation standards that can help you do just that.

On a personal note, as I write this, I have just celebrated my thirtieth anniversary of practice as a construction lawyer, and it has been one “heckuva” ride! I'm privileged beyond measure to represent the commercial construction trade contractors of the Texas Masonry Contractors hold a special place in my heart, because the very first specialty contractors' association I worked with was the United Masonry Contractors Association of DFW – UMCA – and since then, I've worked with all of Texas' regional associations, and with the Texas Masonry Council. You are all united for good, and I look forward to many more years watching the TMC and its associated contractors and associations continue to promote the superior value, endurance and quality that is Masonry, and the rewarding career opportunities the industry presents to today's rising youth.

In Memoriam

Farewell to a Friend: Herb Slavens

As this edition of The Line was about to go to press, we received the sad news that our friend, Jesse “Herb” Slavens, had been called home to the Lord. It seems only fitting that we remember Herb in these pages – as he was a giant in the industry, and he will be missed.

Herb truly started at the very bottom and achieved excellence and earned respect in his masonry career. He began as an Apprentice, and shortly thereafter, joined Dee Brown Masonry in 1955, first as an Apprentice and then, Journeyman. But Herb was just getting started.

As he grew with Dee Brown, Herb’s skills broadened, and soon, he was in the office, as an Estimator and a Project Manager. Herb became President of affiliated company Masonry Technology, Inc., and ultimately, was Executive Vice-President of Dee Brown, Inc.

Herb was a prodigious mentor in the industry, and he served in numerous leadership roles for industry groups, including stints as President of both the American Subcontractors Association’s North Texas chapter and the United Masonry

Contractors Association of DFW, Inc. (UMCA).

When Herb “retired” in 1998, he was just getting started! He consulted for start-up masonry contractors but found his greatest calling in educating new masons. Herb was instrumental in developing and growing the Masonry Training program operated jointly by the Dallas County Community College District and the UMCA, and in this role, Herb taught, coordinated recruitment and selection of new students, and administered the training school. Hundreds of masons owe their careers to Herb’s hard work and sound guidance, and the school thrives today.

Herb leaves behind his loving wife of 69 years, Laura Slavens, son Gene (who himself is a leader in the industry), son Rex Slavens, daughter Joyce Slavens Fletcher, seven grandchildren, one great grandson, and an industry filled with friends and colleagues who will keenly feel the loss of this good man. This writer, for one, mourns the loss of a friend, celebrates a life well-lived, and raises a glass in his honor.

Fair winds, Herb Slavens!



Every Vote Counts!

Texas Masonry Council invites and encourages ALL members to cast their vote for the 2023-2024 Board of Directors.



QR Code or <https://texasmasonrycouncil.org/board-elections/>

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Brick's Back, Straight Stack.

The Amant Art Center campus extends across three blocks in rapidly changing, industrial North Brooklyn, with artist studios, galleries, offices, storage, and a cafe. Acme's Perla clay brick is installed using all its faces, especially including the fluted "back" of the brick. Turned to staccato effect, its irregular and dense verticals render any sense of running bond meaningless. A result is to create buildings as unified volumes, not assembled planes with recognizable patterns. Contrasting stack bond in transitions and interior spaces show the versatility of the Perla brick and its remarkable ability to mimick both the gritty industrial noise outside and the clean, quiet gallery inside, simply by changing exterior faces.

"We like how the reverse side of this brick erases the running bond pattern to create an abstracted texture when seen from a distance. Up close, the fluted backs reveal the processes of production, including the fabrication number stamps, which appear as notations and marks on the clay. As one enters, the curved walls use the smooth face of the full-depth brick—a transition from outside noise to a visually quiet white box gallery space, foregrounding the exhibitions within."

— Kevin Lamyuktseung, Project Manager, SO-IL.org



Amant Art Center Brooklyn, NY
client Lonti Ebers
architects SO-IL
architect of record Andrew Reyniak
project manager Paratus Group
structural Silman Associates
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landscape Future Green
graphics Linked by Air
photography Naho Kubota
artist works in photographs Gala Porras-Kim
awards MASTerworks Best New Building, Architecture Master Prize Best in Best of Cultural Architecture 2021

Acme Brick Perla Steele Gray Modular Velour

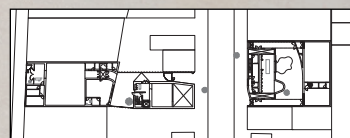


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