Denver University Community Commons

Category 2: Meeting the Challenge of a Difficult Job – Specialty Contractor

ICI, LLC

Denver University Community Commons is located in the center of campus and includes areas for the central hall dining, space for classes and studying, and multiple lounge areas, which will bring people together for meals and conversation. The rooftop venues with scenic mountain and campus views allow the community to enjoy Denver University and Colorado. The student support services will be housed in this building rather than spread over the campus, allowing support and guidance to be in one central location. This 132,000 square foot, four story building will be a place where students and faculty alike will get a feeling of connectivity when utilizing it for years to come.

DU Commons was a design build job with multiple radius walls on the interior with large engineered radius canyons and it required precise drywall installation as multiple trades had to align with the walls. The majority of the finished product was premanufactured, not built in the field. This means ICI had to frame from as-built drawings, mostly steel shops, and then work off future shop drawings (millwork, interior glazing, wood shop drawings). If something was off from the beginning, there had to be multiple meetings and conversations to find the cheapest and quickest solution, as a majority of the products were already complete and on site. This was a common occurrence on all building levels at the end of wall termination to a different, atypical product, as well as storefront heads, and the radius glass that was already manufactured.

ICI had a large scope on this job with exterior framing, sheathing, fluid applied air barrier, and spray foam on the exterior. Interiors included metal framing, drywall, batt insulation, reveal metals, and finishing. ICI also picked up Thermax heavy duty insulation and plaster after the initial contract award. A unique product and the biggest time saver used was Hilti's Top Track Sill. Since all of the project was flat concrete deck, ICI proposed using the Hilti product to maintain STC/fire rating and to provide a clean exposed look, rather than masking a stuff and spray product. The Hilti Top Track Sill was closed off with Trim Tex deflection bead that

maintains wall deflection and closes off the top gap of the drywall to the deck. All exterior and interior studs were cut to exact lengths to reduce waste and cut time on site.

The center canyons were all designed off a radius without hard numbers. The concrete and the steel handrail created the overall radius numbers that ICI had to match framing to. Engineered soffits and mechanical, electrical, and plumbing (MEP) rough-ins also had to be taken into consideration with the framing dimensions. Multiple meetings between 5-6 subs were needed to start the design. These meetings continued after framing was complete, as not all MEP could fit within the design. These three canyons, with approximately 480 linear feet of framing, took over 2 months to complete due to coordination and final design with the architect. Jatin Allen, ICI's Project Manager, was impressed with the canyons and scaffolding work that was required from his team. "The canyons look great and are the first thing that grabs the eye, but three stories above all canyons is the acoustical plaster ceiling with all work being done from platform scaffolding. This ceiling matches the curvature of the exterior windows as well as being on a north/south slope. The ceiling included light soffits to the exterior windows and thin coat plaster, meaning the finish on the drywall could not have any imperfections."

Due to the project being design build, all trades had to work together to voice all opinions before changes were made. The duct, electrical, fire sprinkler, and engineered studs on the canyon soffits presented complications for the team. Multiple calls to the cold formed engineer, mechanical engineer, and fire sprinkler designer were made to come up with solutions that would meet code, while not changing the final design with the architect. Large 80 inch ducts needed to be coordinated with all framing as this was premanufactured. ICI worked together with the mechanical trade early on so all framing, top out, and fire spray could be completed without rework from multiple subs. Each morning, there was a wall coordination meeting. Any design changes or questions were bought up before rework was needed. ICI superintendents and foreman would discuss directly with other subs daily to ensure all questions were answered before completing items. Lift sharing and team cleanup also helped this job move forward as a team, not just individual subs. ICI put a foreman in charge of each phase of this job. The phases included framing, drywall, and finishing. This allowed the general superintendent on the job to

check openings, walk and discuss with other subs, and walk with the architect weekly. Any question or design changes were always verified in an RFI.

The project also involved connecting an existing bridge to the new structure. This process posed many unique challenges for the design build team to overcome. As brick and soffits from the existing bridge were removed, the cold formed framing and air barrier detailing had to be designed in a short amount of time. This required coordinating with other subs regarding substrate new attachment locations and designing all the components for the expansion joint from the bridge to the new construction.

ICI is always proud to be a part of an environmentally friendly project. DU Commons was a LEED Silver V4. All drywall had to be recycled and the metal sorted into a separate dumpster. Low volatile organic compounds (VOC) products were used to help limit our carbon footprint. To help support the local economy, products within a 100 mile radius of the jobsite took priority.

Safety is a main priority at every ICI jobsite and DU Commons was no exception. Daily stretches and huddles took place before starting work and weekly and monthly safety meetings kept everyone up-to-date and on the same page with safety as the project progressed. Julie Maxwell-Vasquez, ICI's Safety Director, states that, "DU Commons was a project that required coordination and communication between ICI and contractors. This was a high-profile project with public exposure. The site had limited space and a schedule that created a site with a lot happening at one time. This required efforts to be put in place so that everyone would remain safe and productive." Through all these challenges there were no lost-time injuries during this project, where the team recorded just under 40,000 man hours in 250 days on site.

As always, a project is only as good as the crew on it. Bob Calligan, ICI's Senior Superintendent and mentor continues to teach our apprentices, journeymen, journeywomen and our construction managers, the techniques and communications needed to complete larger projects. All the foremen under Bob stepped up to coordinate with the other trades during their phase of work. As the job progressed and the production work was completed, Bob moved on the from the job and let Foreman Jose Quinones, complete and work through the final details. As they always say in

construction, the last 10% is the most difficult. In October 2019, ICI's Bob Calligan, Raziel Villa-Valles, Hector Araujo-Saucedo, and Fabian Gonzales Martinez were recognized by the general contractor, Saunders Construction, for going above and beyond every day in helping to keep the project on track. They were all presented with a Denver University pin by a university official.

Thanks to our experienced crew, Denver University Commons is a project that ICI and the community can take pride in for years to come.