

Category 9 - Best Building Project – Specialty Contractor Non-MEP (Over \$2 Million)

Contractor: ICI, LLC

Project Name: Newton Middle School

Newton Middle School, one of four middle schools in the Littleton Public Schools System, received a major upgrade in 2020 and opened for students for the 2021-2022 school year. The old building was showing signs of a failing structure as well as a host of other issues, including ones that effected students with disabilities. The only viable option was to rebuild the entire facility. This \$75 million state-of-the-art middle school is nothing short of impressive. All 168,000 square feet is full of details and amenities that will give students the space and ability to learn in new creative and innovative ways.

Newton Middle School had a very fast paced schedule that had all trades on multiple buildings and elevations simultaneously. This challenge was overcome with precise communication, pre-planning for material, accurate skilled worker headcounts, and talented field leadership. This entire building was completed from beginning to end in 13 months. This left no time for any of the trades to get behind. Merced Marquez, ICI's Field Superintendent, assigned specific parts of the project to key Foremen. Strategic teamwork was one of many steps required to keep everything and everyone on schedule. Merced's large team had daily meetings over what they were going to accomplish as well as what hold ups they may have. Merced made a point to ensure that quality control was done throughout the process to give our client the best product possible. As the product evolved and more workers were on the job, each scope was assigned a leader. These scopes included exterior framing, interior framing, Thermax and liquid armor, drywall, and finishing. While each activity was separated, they had to work as a team to make sure products were installed in unison. ICI would then have to coordinate with the other trades to make sure our work was able to be completed 100% to perfection. The tight schedule did not allocate time for any rework. The supervisors completed a company check list detailing what to look for on every scope we performed. The supervisors also ensured that all necessary prerequisites from the other trades had been completed prior to us beginning our scope. Our QA/QC team constantly verified that all dimensions and details were correct and that the right materials were used.

A second challenge the team faced at Newton Middle School was something that greatly impacted the way we do business. It is no surprise that COVID-19 has touched every aspect of life for everyone in the world. The Construction Industry, and this project were no exception. When our manpower numbers peaked, we had 74 workers on site at the same time. Merced Marquez was the Superintendent on site and said the size of the crew on this project made it a unique challenge. “At one point we had up to 74 employees working at the same time and it took a lot of coordination to make sure everyone was doing what they needed. We had to figure out how to do this safely, yet productively, in order to stay on schedule. I am so thankful for some other ICI supervisors that helped me get this done.”

Being essential workers, these employees did not have the luxury of working from home. Our Human Resource and Safety Team did not take this fact lightly. ICI implemented strict safety protocols and a contact tracing process to ensure that first and foremost, our workers stayed healthy and felt safe. We purchased a Graco disinfecting machine, thermometers, additional masks, and gallons and gallons of hand sanitizer. When hand sanitizer was hard to find, we purchased medical sonogram jelly and rubbing alcohol to make our own hand sanitizer to ensure our workers had what they needed to stay healthy. Julie Maxwell-Vasquez, our Safety Director, did not want the guys to be demoralized by the pungent smell of the sanitizer, so she added essential oils into our recipe to make it smell nicer. During this time, our Newton project had one of the lowest numbers of positive cases in the company, and no cases of serious illness were reported.

This project also took place at the very beginning of the material crisis. We are now accustomed to 6 month or more lead times on key materials and have worked it into our planning. However, it was a new frontier for ICI during this project. We had never experienced anything like it before. The materials quickly went from being in stock, to one week out, to simply not being available for the foreseeable future. The pre-planning and proactive approach taken by our supervisors made it possible to get materials on site throughout this tough and unpredictable time.

The pandemic and the material crisis, combined with the extremely tight schedule created pressure and stress for everyone involved, but because of the united front with GH Phipps and all the trades, the project never experienced a major outbreak.

ICI's \$4.5 million scope on this project included interior and exterior framing, insulation, sheathing, Thermax and air barrier, Fry Reglet metal trimming, drywall, and finishing. Although there were plenty of obstacles to overcome, this building had many unique details that gave our team the opportunity to show off our skills across many scopes. These features of this building include radiused hallways, glulam beams in the hallways and the stage area, and a rock-climbing wall with an elevated running track. It also has a wing dedicated to science and engineering and a second-floor atrium in the library. Some other unique features were the double walls on the exterior that created architectural bump outs. That design was carried into the interior in the radiused hallway. This is something that isn't typically seen on most projects, let alone schools. The details presented on this project made everyone think about how all the trades were going to be sequenced and exactly how material would be installed to give a fantastic result.

Radius work always adds a level of difficulty, but this design required a hallway running the length of the entire building to have the radius curve that the architect envisioned. Our crew had to add a step in the install process so that they could bend the tracks to the radius required. Then install the studs with specific spacing to accommodate the radius and the drywall. Even though this tested the crew's skills, they knocked it out on time. The slight curve that was added to the hallway adds character to the building. Installing the Thermax insulation presented a challenge to our team. They had to add an extra stud 2 inches away from the wall to the inside corners when adding the Thermax. It was a different procedure that the exterior framing team had to learn. Over time they perfected their approach and then smoothly completed all the corners while staying on schedule.

Middle School years are some of the most important years of our lives, as there are many developmental and behavioral changes that happen during this time. This building will give the kids more opportunities to learn about specific classes and focus on more advanced learning. This is possible because the school will offer different music, engineering, science, mathematics, culinary and general classes. Merced always talks about Newton Middle School with a lot of pride, "This school has some cool features for their students, like the climbing wall, greenhouse and amphitheater. The project teams that worked together on this made the project fun and enjoyable to show up to work every day. I am very proud to have been a part of this project and am excited to see the positive impact it will have on the community." With a school this size, it

means more kids will be able to get the education needed to help prepare them for high school and beyond into their adult years.









