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## Thin tile project combines on-site training and expert installation

*Laminam by Crossville, MAPEI, and Schluter products make detailed bank project a success*

*By Lesley Goddin*

When the Commerce Bank in Garden City, Kan., sought to build a new facility, they wanted a clean, easy-to-maintain material on all its bank teller walls.

Howard & Helmer Architecture of Wichita, Kan., turned to Laminam by Crossville, a large thin porcelain tile to get the job done. The 1m x 3m Urban Influence Filo 3+ offered a subtle metallic chain mail-like texture in the dark grey Ghisa hue.

"We chose to use the Laminam porcelain product at the Commerce Bank teller stations not only because of the aesthetic quality, but also the exceptional durability that it offers at high traffic areas," said David White, AIA, president of Howard & Helmer Architecture.

This was to be a challenging installation, said Kevin Fox, owner of NTCA Five Star Contractor Fox Ceramic Tile from St. Marys, Kan.,

who was charged with the project. "It was a very difficult one because of the detail of the cuts and all the corners using Schluter metals that was required," Fox said.

The first step was being sure all the installers on the project were trained on how to handle, work with and install the Laminam panels, which are only 3 mm thick.

Enter Brent Stoller, installation specialist and training manager



*The Fox Ceramic Tile team uses prescribed tools and equipment to safely move large thin porcelain tile (TPT) on the Commerce Bank job.*



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with ISC Surfaces with locations in Missouri, Kansas and Oklahoma. Ceramic Tile Education Foundation (CTEF) training director Scott Carothers said, "ISC Surfaces is the only Laminam training facility



*The crew back butters the Laminam by Crossville large thin porcelain tile to achieve complete coverage.*



*Schluter Rondec and outside corners gave an elegant finish to the walls.*

in the U.S. outside of Crossville itself.” Stoller is a very supportive board member of CTEF. He received CTEF’s CTI Host of the Year award in 2014, and is on record for hosting the largest number of Certified Tile Installer tests at one site. So Stoller “desires to see installations done correctly and is always willing to offer assistance when needed,” Carothers added.

To that end, Stoller came from Kansas City to the Garden City job-site to train Fox’s crew before they began the project. “[He helped] train our tile setters on the latest techniques using the most up-to-date installation tools,” Fox said.

“The ISC Surfaces location in Kansas City, Kan., has been

doing Crossville/Laminam Training since December of 2012, training 27 installation companies with 81 installers through December 2015,” Stoller explained.

“Our trainings are done in our



*Installing the Laminam by Crossville TPT.*



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Kansas City location based on tool requirements; full panel installations, floor and wall, and the transportation issues inherent with those requirements,” he continued. The company offers its customers job-site starts and first-day supervision especially on a first-job scenario based on job-start timing and Stoller’s availability.

ISC Surfaces arose from a blend of several companies over the years: Interstate Supply, Case Supply and AMC Tile, said Stoller. Case supply was the Crossville distributor in the Kansas City territory. Over the past 23 years, Stoller’s relationship with Crossville’s Tim Bolby and ISC’s proactive approach to training and industry commitment through training opened the door to partner with Crossville. In December 2012, ISC was invited on board by Crossville to grow the segment of thin porcelain tile. Active in all levels of the industry, ISC Surfaces is also a host site for both the CTEF CTI and ACT programs with six locations in

Kansas, Missouri and Oklahoma and service to Southern Illinois.

Once trained at the job site, Fox’s team of Certified Tile Installers had additional obstacles to overcome. “We had to work around the countertops,” Fox said.

All installation materials were from MAPEI, starting with the primer for the exterior-grade plywood substrate: MAPEI ECO Prim Grip, with MAPEI Ultralite S2 mortar for the Laminam sheets, grouted with MAPEI Ultracolor Plus. MAPEI sales rep Brett Robben worked with Fox to develop a package of products that offered single-source benefits and a system warranty.

The project took a tremendous amount of care and precision. “Although only 20 sheets of Laminam were used, the installation consumed 60 pieces of Schluter Rondec and 50 outside corners,” Fox said.

The completed project offers sleek, easy-to-maintain work stations for tellers, expertly installed.



*A lippage control system keeps both pieces of TPT per wall side flush. Walls were installed, and counters assembled.*