

From the Initial Look to Future Considerations

Why EIFS Has Become a Popular Choice for Hotels and Resorts

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For guests, hotels and resorts need to paint a pretty picture. Beyond the amenities, does the building catch your eye long enough to prompt you to make a reservation? For the designers and building owners behind the scenes, there are several other considerations. How much will the project cost, does it pass the appropriate tests and does it stand up against unpredictable weather conditions?



Exterior insulation and finish systems (EIFS) can help building owners meet energy codes while also providing a range of aesthetic solutions. The facade of the Cabana Bay Beach Resort at Disney World, for instance, sports a retro look to make guests feel "hip." PHOTOS COURTESY OF EIFS INDUSTRY MEMBERS ASSOCIATION (EIMA)

Hotel owners and developers of new products have to remain fresh, but how they achieve the latest market's desires can be challenging. Although some might question whether a unique design can be achieved while still meeting energy codes and the need to be sustainable, professionals in the exterior insulation and finish systems (EIFS) industry know the easy solution.

Not every hotel will showcase the latest mobile trends, but it's still important the effort is made to cater to the growing travel audience that enjoys sharing every detail of their most recent adventures online. Whether it's sharing an image of the hotel's front door, a shot of the lobby or the unique signage displayed outside, these travelers are offering the opportunity to provide free publicity because the owners cared enough to create the canvas. The validation for this might in fact come from a 2015 TripAdvisor statistic that shows traveler-submitted photos are influencing the booking decisions of 76 percent of users.

TripAdvisor users were onto something, and further justification comes from the way hotel owners and developers are responding. "Everybody pays attention to design," Henry H. Hartevelde, travel analyst for Forrester Research said. "People like things a little bit different, offbeat. And they make someone who may have a rather mundane life feel hip" ([Levere, 2011](#)).

Sometimes the new appealing design comes with a retro renovation.

GOING RETRO ... OR KEEPING IT MODERN

Disney World has never fallen short on unique designs. From castles to different worlds, from sports to comics, the Disney experience is just as memorable today as it was years ago. As the theme parks remain popular for tourists, neighboring hotels and resorts need to keep pace. Cabana Bay Beach Resort went back in time and did just that with its 400,000-square-foot completion in 2014.

Outside of being a recent addition to the area, there is nothing modern about the experience, from the front door to the bedrooms. To achieve a facade reminiscent of the Rat Pack years, the exterior of the resort is clad with both sand-fine and metallic EIFS finishes. While several building materials appear to be present, the advantage of using this specific exterior wall cladding is that the building can be single-sourced. For guests, there's a feeling of living like Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin for the weekend; for ownership, the benefits go far beyond the appearance.

While the Cabana Bay Beach Resort looked to the past, Ocean 22 in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, went big and modern. Although it's a different look, the motivation is the same in these two projects: Build something unique and eye-catching.



The Ocean 22 resort in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, used EIFS on its 22-story building; by blending light and dark finishes reflecting the natural elements of its setting, the facade conveys a contemporary appearance to pique guests' interest.

Standing 22 stories, this Hilton-brand resort is the tallest to be built in Myrtle Beach in almost a decade. Located along the Atlantic Ocean, this EIFS-clad resort again offers several finishes for guests to take in. The exterior provides both lighter and darker shades of beach sand and granite, all appropriately working with its surroundings.

As the trend toward more unique and flashy exteriors continue, EIFS' ability to act as a solution will expand.

Sometimes it's when challenges arise in the planning that EIFS enters the discussion.

SOLVING PROBLEMS

It's not untrue that other exterior wall claddings and building materials can also provide photo-worthy projects. Unlike these two hotel resorts, there are plenty of exciting others that don't use EIFS.

In the case of Columbus, Ohio's Le Meridien, The Joseph, EIFS wasn't even part of the initial conversation. The final design of the hotel isn't drastically different from what was originally envisioned. However, the brick veneer with metal panels was removed from the conversation after budgetary constraints arose. The project team turned to conventional stucco, until energy codes that include continuous insulation requirements forced the project to change course again. It was at that point that EIFS became an option.

A tight construction deadline and site constraints called for quick solutions to move forward. Typical construction could've likely closed neighboring roads for more than half the year, which, it should

come as no surprise, was a non-starter for decision-makers. With all of that needing to be considered, a panelized system was the remaining option.

Choosing a panelized EIF system does a couple things, starting with the move of construction operations to a controlled environment. This change immediately reduces overall time of construction, since it allows for work to be done during difficult weather conditions. Continuing with this, installation moves at an expedited rate since large portions of the exterior are prefabricated. Along with the condensed timeline and offsite work, budgetary reductions were also achieved through small crew sizes. Simply by comparing EIFS to the previously ruled-out stucco cladding, by providing a lighter-weight option, EIFS cut additional costs. Transportation of 25,000 square feet of EIFS is one-sixth the cost when compared to stucco. Furthermore, the weight of EIFS is about one-fifth that of stucco. Both of these help to reduce price and time during transportation and construction. In the case of Le Meridien, The Joseph, interior work was able to begin ahead of schedule, and the impact on the surrounding community was kept to a minimum ([EIMA, 2015](#)).



Sometimes budget and construction schedules play a role in material selection. Le Meridien's The Joseph in Columbus, Ohio, took advantage of a panelized system in part because its off-site construction helped ease constraints of a condensed construction timeline.

While not having to deal with site constraints, a similar story could be told by the East Point, Georgia, development of a Homewood Suites. Initially stalled by the economic downturn in 2007, when the project was given new life, building officials requested clay brick over the building's entire exterior. Faced with the 2009 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) and the cost that would add to the project, the designers were forced to change course. "This masonry material (brick) that everyone likes and thinks of as an incredibly durable material actually expands and shrinks

through temperature changes,” Rob Ponder, Ponder & Ponder, Architects, worked on the Homewood Suites ([Dryvit Systems Inc., 2016](#)).

The conclusion of this project resulted in a continuous brick appearance, with floors two through six using EIFS. In this case, the transition to EIFS, rather than six floors of clay brick, saved an estimated \$175,000 overall and still allowed for a clay brick appearance ([EIMA, 2016](#)).

Both of these examples highlight the struggles hotels continue to have as they compete against the latest innovative designs, while facing an obligation to meet the latest energy codes and the guidelines of a budget.

While boutique hotels still only make up a small percentage of the overall market, in many cases they have an unparalleled ability to be unique. Likely due to this design flexibility, some are anticipating they could eventually make up 10 percent of the market in the coming years ([Levere, 2011](#)). These sorts of figures further justify why settling for something less can never be an option for hotel brands.

WITHSTANDING WEATHER

Appearance isn't everything, though. While it's what people see, and it's what makes you competitive in marketing campaigns, the sustainability and durability of your building is what keeps you going. For resorts like Ocean 22, weather conditions can often be unpredictable. If there was ever a case study to prove this point, it came at Long Beach's Lido Beach Towers.

To be clear, this former hotel resort no longer operates in that manner and is now a 184-room condominium. Originally opening in the late 1920s, this hotel certainly had its share of ups and downs. Up until its change to EIFS from stucco, moisture and energy issues continued to plague this hotel.

In March 2012, *Durability+Design* published an article entitled “[‘Green’ Currency: Retrofit, New-Building Projects Deliver High-ROI Upside](#).” Highlighting the energy-efficiency benefits EIFS brought to the retrofit, the author showed a key reason to consider the exterior wall cladding system. The article specifically pointed out the 33 percent decrease in energy bills ([Speegle, 2012](#)). No one would've known that, months later, this same structure would be tested again — this time its durability against Hurricane Sandy.

“Lido Beach turned out to be very lucky,” says Board President Gary Weiss, who was also president during the five-year-long restoration project. “We never realized that we had built a hurricane-proof building” ([Kaysen, 2013](#)).

While the rehabilitation needed at the Lido Beach Towers weren't going to be achieved overnight, the damage could've been much worse. Beyond damage to the ground floor, initial reports showed very little to the rest of the building.



The Homewood suites in East Point, Georgia, made use of EIFS with a brick appearance on floors two through six that blended in with the first floor of clay brick and saved the project about \$175,000 in material costs.

FROM APPEARANCE TO PERFORMANCE

Over the last decade, EIFS has been tested up and down. With little dispute that it will prove exemplary at improving energy efficiency, as Lido Beach Towers proves, there's more to its performance.

While there are many things hotel owners and designers must think about, appearance stands front and center. From interior room design to the exterior facade, it's possible that designers have never had a more difficult job. This need will continue to show how EIFS can be a valuable initial option, but also an alternative when energy codes and budgetary constraints come into play.

Every project will have its challenges. As we've witnessed in different cases, EIFS can often be the solution.