



The Residences at Two Liberty Place

Project Spotlight



LOCATION:
Philadelphia, PA.

TILE CONTRACTOR:
Lower State Tile & Marble, Inc., Philadelphia, PA.

TILE SUPPLIER:
Dal-Tile, Bensalem, PA.

TILE INSTALLATION SYSTEM:
LATICRETE International, Inc., Bethany, CT

LATICRETE DISTRIBUTOR:
American Olean Tile, Conshohocken, PA.

LATICRETE MANUFACTURING PLANT:
Bethany, CT

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By Eric Carson

On November 28, 1894, the city of Philadelphia raised a 37-foot tall, 53,000 pound statue of its founder and original proprietor William Penn to the top of City Hall, bringing the height to 548 feet, the tallest habitable building in the world at the time.

In fact so important was Penn, a leader during the American Revolution, that the whole territory and later state of Pennsylvania adopted his name, meaning literally, "Penn's Woods."

In reverence to Penn's legacy, a gentlemen's agreement was reached whereby no building in the city would exceed the top of Penn's hat. Believe it or not, it wasn't until 1987, over a century later, that the City of Brotherly Love broke the unspoken pact, manifested with the completion of One Liberty Place, a 61-story building that stands nearly twice as high as the bill of Penn's cap.

Not long after, as was the plan all along, Two Liberty Place raised from the concrete in the shadow of its namesake, standing 58 stories high above Center City, the populous downtown district of the United States fifth-largest city.

Two Liberty Place, considered a trophy building due to its location, space, amenities, security and image, was the corporate home to Ace American Insurance Company and the Cigna Corporation until February of 2005, when the former packed up and moved altogether and the latter reduced its space by roughly half, down some 400,000 square feet.

It was around this time when Florida-based developers had a vision and the capital to execute it, purchasing the top 20 floors of Two Liberty Place and converting them to super high-end condominiums. Slated to open in the spring of 2008, the "Residences at Two Liberty Place" promise to be some of the most exclusive digs in all of Philly.

In all, 90 elegant condos are up for sale, the higher the floor the higher the price, offering breathtaking views of the three different states and the city below. Two Liberty Place, the city's third tallest building and the 33rd tallest building in the country, now boasts the highest residence in all of Philly as well as the highest restaurant, but it doesn't end there.

The residents of Two Liberty Place will be treated to the finest service available, including a computerized concierge system, a full sauna, spa, pool, fitness center and gourmet restaurant, not to mention a VIP pet concierge with walking, grooming, and sitting services included.

Before anyone could move in, there was work to do converting the old office space into high-end condos for the Philadelphia elite. The large open spaces had to be closed off, bedrooms and dens built, bathrooms and full kitchens with upscale amenities had to be installed. If that wasn't enough, the old corporate carpet had to be torn up from every floor, replaced in the lobbies and hallways with high-end imported marble and cut in-house by Lower State Tile & Marble, Inc. The Crema Marfil chosen for the floors and walls of each bathroom was supplied by Dal-Tile in Bensalem, PA.

To install the high-end marble in all the residences and lobbies, including marble mosaics in the spa, Lower State Tile & Marble, under the guidance of owner Chris DiDonato, hit the scene with a complete range of LEED compliant installation materials from LATICRETE, a global leader in the environmentally-friendly manufacturing of innovative systems for the installation of ceramic tile and stone. Lower State Tile purchased the LATICRETE system materials from American Olean Tile in Conshohocken, PA, due west some 15 miles from Center City.

"We've been using LATICRETE heavily for the last three years," said DiDonato. "My dad used to use LATICRETE before I even started. Once American Olean opened up in Conshohocken it was more available to us. They have been shipping us skids direct. This project represents the highest end in condos. And they certainly got a high-end finished look."

To begin the process of setting all the floors with the imported marble in the common areas, Lower State Tile first had to cut the marble out of its own slabs in its shop. On the floors, the large format marble was set over a poured concrete substrate with 220 Medium Bed Mortar. Mixed with water, 220 Medium Bed Mortar is a fortified dry-set mortar specifically formulated to provide a one-step installation for large format ceramic tile, marble and stone. 220 Medium



Bed Mortar supports heavy tiles and stone, reducing lippage problems, which was a major benefit to Lower State Tile due to the often uneven concrete substrate at the Residences at Two Liberty Place. The thickness provided by 220 Medium Bed Mortar allowed Lower State Tile to beat in the tiles as needed and compensate for differences in the substrate.

To set the Crema Marfil tiles on the walls, Lower State Tile took a different approach, selecting 254 Platinum to capitalize on the tenacious bond and superior workability of this premium thin-set. GREENGUARD certified, 254 Platinum is ideal for interior or exterior applications on all suitable substrates, including the cement backer board in place at Two Liberty Place. 254 Platinum protects against stain-causing mold and mildew with antimicrobial protection from Microban®, while far exceeding all ANSI requirements for shear bond strength.

“We actually went through a bunch of different LATICRETE products trying to figure out what the crew was most comfortable with,” said DiDonato. “254 Platinum stuck the best on the walls. It has a long open time and when we stuck the tiles on the walls they didn’t sag. We tapped them in and they hung beautifully.”

For the wet areas at the Residences at Two Liberty Place, including the private baths of each condo and the spa areas on the 37th floor, a revolutionary product representing the new industry standard for waterproofing membranes, LATICRETE Hydro Ban™, was utilized for its long list of groundbreaking benefits. LATICRETE Hydro Ban is a thin, load bearing, liquid applied waterproofing and anti-fracture membrane that does not require the use of fabric in the field, coves or corners, eliminating the most time consuming aspect of installing tile with a waterproofing membrane. A single component, roller or brush applied membrane that protects against mold and mildew with antimicrobial protection from Microban®, LATICRETE Hydro Ban bonds directly to a wide variety of substrates including copper, steel, stainless steel and PVC. LATICRETE Hydro Ban is GREENGUARD certified and can be flood tested when fully cured in 24 hours.

To grout all of the marble tiles on the floors and walls at the Residences at Two Liberty Place, Lower State Tile mixed LATICRETE 1600 Unsanded Grout with 1776 Grout Enhancer, a GREENGUARD certified combination.

1600 Unsanded Grout is a premium, factory prepared, polymer fortified unsanded portland cement grout, formulated from a blend of high strength portland cement, graded aggregates, polymers and color fast pigments.

1776 Grout Enhancer was used in place of water to provide a dense, colorfast grout joint that inhibits stain-causing mold and mildew with antimicrobial protection from Microban®.

The Residences at Two Liberty Place begin on the 37th floor, a common floor shared by all condo owners that features several high-class amenities, including an endless pool, spas, a fitness center, gourmet restaurant and the VIP pet concierge. The marble in the hallways was installed with the same LATICRETE System, with 220 Medium Bed Mortar on the floors and 254 Platinum on all the walls. The high-design, 1" x 1" marble mosaics used on all the walls and pool surrounds by the endless pool on the amenities floor, as well as for all the baths and showers, were installed using HYDRO BAN, 254 Platinum, and the same grout combination used on all of the marble. Lower State Tile rolled on HYDRO BAN, allowed it to cure, then applied a skim coat of 254 Platinum, allowed it to cure, then came back with 254 Platinum to set the mosaics.

For now, with construction nearing final completion, the only remaining details to be worked out are who will be moving into these extravagant new condominiums. Perhaps a high-ranking CEO, a pro athlete or a politician? Whoever decides to purchase a condo at the Residences at Two Liberty Place, they certainly won’t be disappointed.

And in a strange twist of fate, anyone on the north side of the building can look down and gaze at the backside of William Penn’s famous statue. In the spirit of advancing the state he loved that bears his name, it seems easy to believe he wouldn’t mind.





LATICRETE International, Inc. · One LATICRETE Park North, Bethany, CT 06524-3423 USA · 1.800.243.4788 · +1.203.393.0010 · www.laticrete.com



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