

Builders Turn to Copper for Practical, Visually Stunning Wall Claddings

Copper Cladding Preferred as Lightweight, Long-Lasting, Efficient Material for Fabricating Wall Panels

It started on rooftops and is increasingly making its way down the sides of buildings and onto the structures below. [Copper wall-cladding](#) options are becoming more popular in North America as builders adopt the style for various architectural purposes.

The preference for copper is not limited to aesthetics. While it's true that builders who gravitate to copper likely see the visual benefits, they also recognize the practical implications of cladding with durable, lightweight and long-lasting materials like copper, brass and bronze. In an era of sustainability and energy efficiency, copper cladding gives architects an ideal avenue for creative, useful design.

Over the last few years, the Copper Development Association (CDA) has seen an increase in the number of copper-cladding systems installed on commercial buildings, evident by those projects selected for a [North American Copper in Architecture \(NACIA\) Award](#). Projects such as academic facilities, learning institutes, museums and sports and recreation centers have all been recognized with a NACIA award for incorporating some form of cladding system in the design.

What also makes copper-cladding systems attractive to builders is that it can be field-formed from sheet material or pre-manufactured and transported to the jobsite.

Take screen panels, for example. Building designers are using copper-screen panels as lightweight-finish screens to repel rainwater while allowing in light. The panels can be perforated to allow in the right amount of sunlight, and they are easily cut to include openings that act as decorative designs.

"Architects want options that add to the structural integrity of a building, but that also enhance the interior and exterior features, both performance-wise and aesthetically," said Andy Kireta Jr., Vice President of CDA. "Copper wall cladding can meet both needs. It's long-lasting, sturdy and requires significantly less in the way of regular maintenance. The end result looks amazing."

Likewise, curtain-wall systems are increasingly made from copper to better control air leaks, moisture and temperature. Copper panels are preferred because they are easy to shape and of the right weight for secure hanging. In modern architecture, this type of innovative thinking is crucial for long-term building life. Consider, for example, the Seagram Building in New York City, which was built in 1957 and comprises bronze and glass components for its curtain-wall system, with mullions running the full height of the building.

In addition to standard sheet copper installations which provide some natural surface contours, composite panels made with thin copper sheets clad to the exterior of a structural substrate offer designers the ability to create a dead-flat building surface for a uniform, aesthetic look. These panels are strong, lightweight and can vary by thickness, depending on the project and whether it's for indoor or outdoor use.

Copper's light weight and high formability give designers and building owners nearly unlimited options in creating an exterior building texture to match the design intent of the project: from perforated rain screens, to corrugated folds reflecting the mountain terrain of a building site, to repeating shingle patterns, copper-wall cladding creates visually stunning, long-lasting, low-maintenance, sustainable building systems.

To view outstanding examples of how architects and designers have incorporated copper in today's best building designs visit the [North American Copper in Architecture \(NACIA\) Award](#). To learn more about how you can integrate copper into your projects, visit www.copper.org.