Ave Maria University — A Vision in Copper
The first Catholic university established in 40 years is being built, and roofed, with long-term sustainability in mind.

Ave Maria University, Naples, Florida

Personal commitment to a idea is a rare commodity in business, where corporate interests, market forces and the need for profit often undermine the loftiest of goals.

So when Thomas S. Monaghan purchased 230 acres of land in Southwest Florida to realize his dream project—creating a Catholic university in southern Florida—the thought of copper came with some serious soul-searching when the value of the copper versus the plastic was evaluated.

Monaghan, the founder of Domino’s Pizza and former owner of the 1964 World Series champion Detroit Tigers baseball team, is well aware that he’s going to have to gain a quick $1 million or more in profit, but he wouldn’t consider any part of his campus’s architectural plans.

For a man of ideals and well-defined goals, like Monaghan, the choice was easy.

“We weren’t looking to make a profit,” he stated in a recent interview, gesturing around him at the gleaming new copper roof of Ave Maria University near Naples, Florida. “Our goal was sustainable buildings—not 20-year building, but 50 to 100 year buildings. I don’t want my successor to water down the building plans in the future. Our whole theme is copper roofs.”

All of the campus buildings have, or will be, made of copper, standing side by side with copper roofs. This includes copper roofing for the University’s campus center, in part, from his longstanding admiration of Wright, who favored copper and copper roofs for many of his projects. An avid architecturalbuff, Monaghan’s own copper-roofed home in Ann Arbor, Michigan, is the reason he’s not working in Chancellor at his Ave Maria, also was designed to evoke Wright’s iconic Prairie Style homes.

Larry Peters, the regional manager representing architectural programs for the Copper Development Association, consulted on the university’s use of copper early in Ave Maria’s planning stages. “This is the most extensive use of copper I’ve seen in the past 10 years, certainly in the Southeast,” he says. “These people understand that they’re building for the future, and that’s why they’re so committed. They know they’ve made a smart investment.”

Despite the potential vulnerability the university could plan to gain by selling off the copper, Monaghan says they will stick to the original plan of roofing all the campus buildings with the metal.

“Copper is a good-long-term investment from an economic standpoint,” he says. “I don’t consider it a luxury. Once you have copper on the building, it’s not something you can compare to tin or anything else. Nothing is more beautiful. Eighty to 90 percent of a structure’s appearance is the roof. We didn’t have to put money into the design of the buildings because it wasn’t an importance.”

“Solderless Plumbing” Offers Green, Timesaving Advantages

New Building Codes To Require Fire Sprinkler Systems in Homes

All new constructed one- and two-family homes will soon have to include automatic fire sprinkler systems with installation and testing being done by the International Code Council, which develops model building codes and standards in the United States.

The “burning” question for builders and homeowners alike as of late, beginning in January 21, is whether they would rather be protected by plastic, steel or copper—the three principal piping materials used in today’s sprinkler systems. All are approximately used in both commercial and residential structures.

Threaded steel pipe was for many years preferred for sprinkler systems in commercial facilities. Steel pipe is inexpensive and easy to install in open, accessible areas, and where its bulky, rough-looking appearance is no objection. It is also easy to bond the fitting to the pipe. Push-on fittings, which easily withstand extreme temperature shifting or adjustment. The press-connect method is generally permanent and requires a special tool to disconnect. Both types employ gaskets to create a watertight seal.

Threaded steel pipe has been used in Europe for years and is gaining in popularity in this area. The key advantages are fast assembly and less skill required than soldering. They also can be used where using heat is difficult or dangerous, joints can be made with ease in the tube and connections can be tested immediately after fabrication.

The growing adoption of cold fittings is already having an impact. In recent years, soldered pipe systems have made inroads into the market, which easily withstand extreme temperature shifting or adjustment. The press-connect method is generally permanent and requires a special tool to disconnect. Both types employ gaskets to create a watertight seal.

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