

C M U*Profiles in Architecture***THE BLF BUILDING**

LANCASTER, CALIFORNIA

Between Lancaster and Palmdale, California there is an area known as Mid-City. It is an older industrial area, filled with a sea of faceless metal and mixed use commercial buildings. Out of this sea, emerged a building of timeless beauty. When the owner of BLF Real Estate, John Brooks, a well respected general contractor and developer in the area, first contacted our firm to design the building, he wanted something different and wanted to be involved in the design. The idea of the building was to create a simple, but elegant building, using a rich blend of form color and texture. Initially, the concrete masonry block material was chosen for the building for speed, ease of construction and durability. It also turned out to be economical and most of all beautiful.

The rich colors of this building tend to anchor the building into the desert landscape. Since the building is on a corner, the design of the front and sides were equally important. To address the corner, a forty-five degree wall was used as a focal point into the two spec lease spaces. The other entry faces the street to increase the exposure and signage visibility. The peer size (the space between the windows) was limited to maximize the glass size. This was important because, at the time the building was designed, only one tenant was known. This tenant (Johnstone Supply) required approximately 10,000 square feet of industrial warehouse and retail showroom. A twenty-five foot high warehouse was designed with a storage mezzanine above the restrooms. In front of the warehouse, a seventeen foot high showroom adds a human scale to the enormous warehouse. The remaining portion of the building (approximately 4,200 square feet) was designed to have maximum flexibility for any kind of use.

The design of the building starts out with using an 8"x8"x16", half-score, oak color, split-face concrete masonry block (CMU) at the base. This gives the illusion of an 8"x8"x8" CMU. Then an accent band was added using an 8"x4"x16", slate color, burnished, CMU. This narrow band made a huge impact on the distinctive caricature of the building. Less is definitely more in this case; your eye is drawn directly to the band. Above the band, 8"x8"x16" harvest color, split-

face, CMU extends to the EPS cornice at top of the building. Care was given to use precision CMU under the cornice, to provide a smooth straight edge between the cornice and the building. To give the building its classic appeal, a series of 6"x8"x16", half-score, oak color, split-face, CMU's were used above each set of windows. This difference of block size created a recessed look. At each support for the metal canopies an 6"x8"x8" oak color, precision, CMU was used. This ensured that the metal bracket plate would have a smooth surface to attach the canopy bracket to the CMU. As a finishing touch, painted steel canopies were added over the large storefront windows to shade the tinted, low "e" squared glass from the harsh desert environment. One-inch threaded rods and turn-buckles were used to support and level the canopies. A panelized wood roof system was used to provide the required structural ties and to minimize cost.

ARCHITECT:
Charles L. Browne, RA
 P. O. Box 3051
 Quartz Hill, CA 93586

Charles L. Browne, RA
Principal

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER:
 Antelope Valley Engineering, Inc.

GENERAL CONTRACTOR:
 Gary Little Construction

MASONRY CONTRACTOR:
 Nibbelink Masonry

BLOCK PRODUCER:
 Desert Block Company, Inc.

OWNER:
 BLF Real Estate, LLC



Photography: Mitch Rubin, Desert Block Company, Inc.