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URBAN FOREST PRODUCTS

CASE STUDY

DoMUS Apartments
MILWAUKEE



Mandel Group is known for its attention to detail. And the developer's latest luxury apartment project in Milwaukee's Historic Third Ward was no exception.

"Everything, from the unit layout, placement of finishes, and the small details like paint color, was selected specifically to elevate the level of design," said Cara McDonough, interior designer for HGA, the architecture firm that designed DoMUS. "DoMUS was developed for residents who were looking for a permanent home in a temporary housing market while maintaining high end living in the Third Ward."

DoMUS was built on the last piece of developable property on the Riverwalk's east shore, so it was a special project from the start, according to Nate Gebert, senior project manager, construction for Mandel Group.

"When building on the river, you have a direct connection between the city and nature, so we wanted to use that connection throughout the design," Gebert said.

Urban wood embodies the city and nature connection Gebert speaks of since urban wood comes from trees where we live - on streets, in parks, on residential land and commercial properties. Using Wudeward Urban Forest Products, an exclusive supplier of Wisconsin Urban Wood,



assures buyers that the wood originated from Wisconsin and passed through an entire supply chain of Wisconsin-based people and businesses to arrive as the final product

McDonough had worked with Wudeward Urban Forest Products when researching Wisconsin Urban Wood for a Door County library project. She was intrigued by the

history of the product - that trees had been removed from communities due to failing health, damage, or being cleared for construction. They would normally be sent to a landfill but were instead given a second life as furniture, flooring, or architectural woodwork.

Since the whole log is milled, the processed lumber yields an entire spectrum of possible grades, from clear to full-of-character, and no two

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boards are alike. The rich and varied character in each board is a window into the life the tree lived – constraints, adaptations, damage and all – making every application a work of art.

Michelle Scanley, another HGA designer, saw the Wudeward sample in the HGA materials library and thought it would work well for open shelving over a wet bar in the DoMUS project. It was functional, beautiful, local, and it fit the bill.

“We pitched Wisconsin Urban Wood shelving to Mandel Group and they loved the idea of a local, premium product,” McDonough said. “They felt Wisconsin Urban Wood provided a unique, locally-crafted story that would resonate with future residents. The cost of the product was deemed to be a value proposition by Mandel, with favorable return on investment.”

Planning and Selection

The DoMUS project was a year from breaking ground when HGA and Wudeward first started talking about the potential application of urban wood in the project. This longer lead time gave Wudeward the time to source the species and volume of lumber needed so the design team could achieve the exact look they wanted.

Interior designers working with traditional wood sources don't need to see it or confirm it is available. They

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just point and click. In sustainable sourcing, and Wisconsin Urban Wood, in particular, a nominal amount of additional upfront planning yields terrific results and provides the opportunity to think about and incorporate wood in a different way.

“We knew using urban wood would mean not all planks would look the same,” McDonough said. “That, and the sustainable sourcing story that

comes with it is why we were drawn to using urban wood in the first place.”

Wudeward provided samples early on of different species of Wisconsin Urban Wood lumber to demonstrate character, learn what variations of character the designers and client deemed acceptable, and consider the hardware to hold it, ideal board thickness, and finish alternatives.

HGA and Mandel selected American elm because it matched the color of the casegoods in the unit best, it was abundant at the time, and it could be provided within the timeline. American elm was at one time the most abundant street tree in metropolitan Milwaukee, until the arrival of Dutch elm disease in the 1960s. Wudeward advised in all of the details including hardware recommendation, placement, providing mockups, and ultimately, delivery and installation within the timeline.

“Wisconsin Urban Wood provides warmth in a room as a natural product, it is beautiful, and it gives us the ability to reuse a valuable resource,” said Gebert. “We have a lot of specialty products throughout DoMUS. Selecting Wisconsin Urban Wood did not come with a large premium price difference compared to the alternatives.”

Specification and Installation

The team’s foresight and effective communication contributed to the success of the entire project. First, the designers understood they needed a different approach when working with sustainable materials. Second, they allotted a one-year lead time to achieve the look they wanted. And third, they maintained a collaborative nature with the general contractor, C.D. Smith Construction, Inc., and Wudeward.

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Adding Wisconsin Urban Wood to a specification is critical for working with urban wood – and any sustainably sourced material, for that matter. The specification is where the design team can describe and clearly communicate the urban wood lumber order to all involved in purchasing,

receiving, and installing the product. HGA did so and it was the foundation for a shared vision of the final product.

“We specified that we would only work with Wudeward Urban Forest Products for the Wisconsin Urban Wood – after all of the work Dwayne

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had done for us to confirm the design, we did not want to go elsewhere, we said this was exactly what we wanted, from start to finish," McDonough said.

Brian Verheyen, project engineer for general contractor C.D. Smith had never heard of Wisconsin Urban Wood before it was listed in the design specs.

"When I saw Wisconsin Urban Wood and Wudeward Urban Forest Products listed in the spec, I immediately got in touch with Dwayne to learn more about it," Verheyen said. "Dwayne introduced me to how the installation process works, then I talked to the architects to make sure I understood the standard they were looking for.

You have to pay attention to even the smallest detail in order for the end result to be the way the architect wanted it to be."

Wudeward worked with HGA, Mandel Group, and C.D. Smith to run through the installation plans and schedule, determined what support pieces were

WHAT CAN URBAN WOOD BE USED FOR?

Many designers and developers interested in using Wisconsin Urban Wood ask if the application is limited. Since we use the entire log in processing a tree into lumber, the grade is comparable to millrun.

This picture of DoMUS shows multiple types of materials and finishes. HGA and Mandel Group selected this unique mix to give the apartment building a custom and luxury look. While in this case Wisconsin Urban Wood was used for shelving, if you look at the rest of the living space, urban wood could just as easily be applied to the countertops, cabinets, and flooring.

Following are some things to consider when seeking urban wood in large volumes:

- **LEAD TIME** Plan and prepare to source the volume of lumber you need so you can get the exact look you want.
- **FINISH** Don't get tied to species. If an urban wood species you are looking for is unavailable, an abundant amount of another species could be stained to match.
- **VARIATION** Every application of Wisconsin Urban Wood is a work of art because no two boards look exactly the same - that goes for clear board and distinguished boards alike. Work the variation to your advantage by arranging it to create the right amount of drama or balance you are looking for.
- **SPECIFICATION** Be sure to specify Wudeward and Wisconsin Urban Wood in the design, along with the desired species, finish, width, length, thickness, supplier, and installer. The more detail can be confirmed upfront means the easier the process becomes once the general contractor, schedules, and budget adjustments are involved.
- **COMMUNICATION** DoMUS is a testament to how communication and collaboration are key to a successful project working with sustainably sourced materials. The more attention is paid upfront, the more streamlined and standard the process becomes once construction begins.



needed behind the drywall, and made sure everyone was aware of the lead time for the lumber, what it would look like when the shipment arrived, and how long the shelves would take to install.

The schedule was created and adjusted based on these conversations so the delivery and installation of the shelving went no different than if they were working with any standard material.

“Because of the shelving’s success in the units, we looked for ways to move it out into the public areas of the building,” McDonough said. “We were developing a design to conceal the metal mailboxes and used urban wood planks to create a shade that serves as a nice divider, concealer, and focal point.”

All-in, a set of Wudeward’s Wisconsin Urban Wood lumber shelves is featured in 117 of the premier apartment homes in DoMUS, in the community room, and in a floor-to-ceiling series of planks greeting residents as they enter the building and check their mail. Urban wood is even on the cover of the DoMUS promotional materials, knots and striations juxtaposed against swirling marble.

Community Response

DoMUS rented briskly before construction was even complete. Now that residents have settled in, Wisconsin Urban Wood is part and parcel of the DoMUS living experience.

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“The shelves look fantastic,” said Verheyen. “They contribute to why the entire building turned out really nice. We have gotten a lot of compliments on DoMUS.”

It’s not just the completed shelving that keeps the team excited about the project’s success – it’s the entire story of discovering urban wood, customizing the shelving design, and giving a local, sustainable resource a second life.

“We were shocked to see that such a quality product can come from the urban forest and it was nice to be able to divert what is normally a waste product from the landfill,” said Gebert. “The end product is a look that says, ‘Wow.’ And we have enjoyed the process of watching our residents learn about it and appreciate it.”

Learn more about Wudeward and Wisconsin Urban Wood at wudeward.com.