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## Wick tower restored to its former glory

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The historic Wick Tower in downtown Youngstown, Ohio, has seen both peaks and valleys since its completion in 1910 — even boasting the tallest building in town for several decades. But hard financial times affected the stately building and it slowly fell into disrepair. When the building sold to local developer Dominic Marchionda in 2012, work began to restore the dignified structure to its original splendor — but adding modern amenities and features to speak to the tastes of today's renters.

City Architecture, a Cleveland-based firm, designed 32 upscale and modern individual apartments and included a convenient deli on the first floor. With a nod to its rich past, the developer wanted to keep the integrity of the building and take advantage of the existing tall ceilings and its solid steel construction.

In April 2014, John Yurcik with Preferred Sales, an Uponor rep firm based in Hermitage, Pennsylvania, received a phone call from Clayton Heating and Air Conditioning, a local mechanical contractor hired to install the hydronic heating and cooling distribution system for the Wick Tower.

“I had worked with Tim Clayton, the owner, on several radiant applications, and he’s very familiar with Uponor,” Yurcik says. “He had one question for me: ‘Can I run a four-pipe fan coil system through the existing structure using Uponor?’”

**"It became pretty clear fast that Uponor was really the only choice for this job. It's the only manufacturer to offer this type of system in this type of application."**

The two met, studied the architectural plans, the mechanical designs and pondered the limitations that working within an existing structure (more than 100 years old) provides. There were several points to consider: extremely snug workspace above the ceiling, plenum-rated piping was a must (required by the building owner), insulation concerns and tight timelines and budgets.

### **Plenum spaces, plenum listing**

It’s becoming more common for developers to use plenum-rated piping in plenum spaces because this is the only space available in remodeling and even in some new construction applications, according to Yurcik. And local codes sometimes dictate that a plenum-rated product must be used. Uponor is the only PEX manufacturer to offer a complete system with ASTM E84 plenum listing.

In addition, Uponor also offers pre-insulated Wirsbo hePEX™ piping with varying sizes from ½” to 2” — all specified for this installation.

“It became pretty clear pretty fast that Uponor was really the only choice for this job,” Yurcik says. “It’s the only manufacturer to offer this type of system in this type of application.”

Though Clayton HVAC has a long-standing experience installing PEX, 23 installers were trained for the Uponor pre-insulated Wirsbo hePEX installation to help them feel comfortable with the process.

Yurcik demonstrated the product, showed installation techniques, how to make a proper F1960 expansion connection, how to hang the pipe properly in a plenum space, discussed ratings and how to repair kinks if they should occur. The process — which included both classroom and on-site training — quickly helped the installers get up to speed and, after a brief exam, they were ready to move on to the installation stage.

The installation was fairly straightforward, with the pipe looping above the joist within rooms and then linked to the distribution manifold at each floor. The distribution lines run across hallways to the main hydronic water supply risers that run from the basement mechanical room to the top floor of the building.

### **Hydronic heating and cooling systems on the rise**

By using a hydronic heating and cooling system, HVAC contractors save on labor (fewer installers needed) for a significantly shorter and quicker installation with less use of connections than a copper system.

“Hydronic heating and cooling is a hot topic these days,” Yurcik says. “And it really doesn’t seem to make sense for installers to continue down the copper path anymore.”

He is referring to the fluctuating cost of copper (making it difficult to price a job), the need for additional connections over PEX and the risk of theft of copper on job sites.

And for this particular installation, it

would have been impossible to install copper

in the cramped work space. And even if it had been possible, adding insulation would have made the job incredibly time and labor intensive, Yurcik adds.

Clayton, the owner of Clayton Heating and Air Conditioning, told Yurcik that it would have been cost-prohibitive to use any other product than the pre-insulated Wirsbo hePEX.

“There are a lot of limitations in revamping high-rise buildings, and this product is, in my opinion, the only way installers can provide the efficiencies and the cost and labor savings the current market conditions require,” Yurcik says.