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[WEB EXCLUSIVE: Student Housing Gets High Marks](#)



Gauging the rapid leasing of the North 38 Apartments near Virginia's James Madison University, the development has earned excellent marks. North 38 is one of the latest projects by Wood Partners, a national leader in multi-unit housing including senior, assisted living, apartments, and condos. The company also has a particular focus on luxurious, yet affordable student residences.

Gone are the days of wan, worn, decades old off campus apartments. North 38 is far from just a roof over a student's head. The facilities are designed to allow students to study, focus, and play in a relaxed, modern setting.

The 19 apartment buildings at North 38 include a resort style pool, clubhouse, and outdoor recreation space with stainless steel grills. Inside, the three- and four- bedroom units feature clean design, space maximizing floor plans, and contemporary furnishings including flat panel TVs and leather couches. Each bedroom in a unit comes with its own private bath.

"Our residents appreciate our curb appeal and higher construction quality. You certainly never get a second chance to make a first impression, it's critical," said Blair Sweeney, development manager for North 38 at Franklin Holdings.

To achieve the dynamic exterior and set a vibrant tone, there is focus on color and texture details. Simultaneously, there are durable products to keep maintenance costs down and to provide lasting beauty over the coming decades for a frequently rotating student population.

To help meet these needs, Foundry Siding by The Tapco Group was specified in a rich cocoa color as an exterior accent, including the many gables of the apartment buildings. The same formula was applied to the apartments' stone veneer.

"The stone look and the shake accent here really pull everything together. It's a great looking combination of color and texture," said Phil Vetter, Wood Partners' project manager for North 38. "The stone really sets off the look of the buildings and makes them stand out as something different. It's a key factor in creating exciting appeal."

At North 38, 47,000 square feet of StoneCraft's LedgeStone profile in the Chardonnay color were installed. This combination harmonizes the buildings' skirt applications and also infuses warm character to the pool and fountain area and the community's welcome signage.



In a resident survey on the visual appeal of the complex, 82% of residents rated it “excellent” – the highest level among five choices. Sweeney said that residents – and their parents – often say they are surprised at North 38’s total quality.

“I think our residents feel much more comfortable and at home. It makes a world of difference. In fact, our largest marketing source is word of mouth,” he noted.

Located in the Shenandoah Valley, North 38 is surrounded by mountains and rolling hills.

“There’s even a pasture across the street,” said Sweeney. “While our buildings look very classy, you also get the sense that the exteriors blend into the surrounding landscape and add something to the landscape. I’ve heard that from others also. There are some other complexes here that don’t pull that off so well.

“I think the overall look of the exteriors has actually won us some allies in the community—other developers, town council members, the former mayor, and people in the planning department,” said Sweeney.

According to Vetter, the Foundry Shake exteriors were a nice surprise from both beauty and installation aspects. “The shake accents have an authentic look and the standard Foundry color we used was impressive. Compared to the fiber cement siding, accent panels and wood trim that we typically use, vinyl’s just not as messy and labor intensive. I loved the ease and the speed of the Foundry’s installation. It was considerably cleaner.

“From a performance standpoint, vinyl makes things maintenance-free. It’s a real benefit regarding management and maintenance. The accent shakes, particularly in the higher parts of the buildings and gables, are difficult to maintain if you have to repaint fiber cement every couple of years,” Vetter said.



“The lack of maintenance cost,” added Sweeney, “is very attractive when you consider both The Foundry and StoneCraft. Over several years at a number of projects, StoneCraft looks just as good as the day we installed it. That’s tough to do.”

Completed in August 2008, North 38 is among Wood Partners’ most recent student communities in a project portfolio that includes the University of Illinois, Mississippi State, and Florida State.

“For the university communities we serve, I don’t think any property is competing with what we offer,” Vetter said. “I think the tide is turning to where students have more choice and properties are starting to elevate their level of service and amenities. We’ve heard about outdated properties and a lack of service. As we continue to build attractive student housing, I think we’re setting the bar high with our features and luxurious living. That’s our standard.”