Sound Shield 7000 reduces noise, enhances buzz of excitement for San Diego high-rise condos

By Randy Schultz

Developers of the Vantage Pointe high-rise condominium and retail tower being built in downtown San Diego envisioned a trendy home address admired for its panoramic views of the Coronado Bridge, San Diego Bay and the elegant city skyline. Perhaps the sporadic call of a cruising seagull or the bellowing horn of an arriving ship would add to the mystique. On the other hand, they hoped to avoid the sounds of neighbors talking on the floor above, the boom of a sound system or an occasional dropped pan or squeaky sneaker. After all, this was to be urban living on a high density, multi-level scale. The idea was to create a close, community feeling without impinging on privacy.

That’s why Creative Touch Interiors, one of the industry’s leading providers of interior finish solutions and the firm
who handled the design center services, countertop and flooring installations for the 679-unit, 40-story residential and commercial use tower, opted to use Mer-Krete Systems’ Sound Shield 7000 as a sound reduction barrier between floors. The Sound Shield 7000 mat is a fiber-reinforced rubber underlay developed to significantly reduce mid to high-frequency impact sounds such as normal speech, footsteps and other common home activity noises. By the time Vantage Pointe is completed in 2009, somewhere between 500,000 and 750,000 square feet of Sound Shield 7000 will have been laid under the tile, stone and wood flooring of the stylish condominium residences, according to Kendall Leak, Mer-Krete Regional Sales Manager.

Testing taps

Before finalizing its selection of the Sound Shield product, Creative Touch Interiors ran a comprehensive acoustic tapping test on a downstairs unit constructed specifically for testing noise transfer. Tests were performed under tile in the bathroom and entryway, and with wood flooring in the kitchen. Mer-Krete Sound Shield 7000 registered impressive Impact Insulation Class (IIC) ratings of 48 in the bathroom and 52 in the entryway and kitchen, well above the recommended norm. The product has been consistently garnering a Delta number of approximately 18, an equally enviable score.

“We were very impressed by the performance of Sound Shield 7000,” said Charlie Ringer, field supervisor for Creative Touch Interiors. “Now that we’ve begun installing the product we really like the convenience aspect, too. The 4-foot by 3 1/2-foot panel
sheets lay flatter than rolled products, and there’s no curling. We can get 150 sheets on a pallet, use our forklift to deliver it to the proper floor, and our installers can take exactly what they need per each unit. You can actually fold the sheets if you’re carrying them in a tight hallway, then unfold them, line up the edges and lay them right into place. It has made our job a lot easier. In fact, we’re installing 1,500 to 2,000 square feet per day.”

Rising in the downtown Core District, Vantage Pointe features 88 different floor plans, and homebuyers can customize various aspects of their plan through Creative Touch Interiors’ all-purpose Design Center. Prices are expected to range from the mid $300,000’s to $1.3 million for the residences, which will feature one to two bedrooms, as well as outdoor viewing balconies. Convenient retail stores and restaurants will be presented at street level, giving homebuyers a number of enticing choices.

“Each residential unit presents its own set of challenges because of design variations throughout,” Ringer noted. “The nice thing about Sound Shield 7000 is that it works well in all types of conditions and in all kinds of rooms, from living areas and playrooms, to kitchens and baths.”

Mer-Krete Sound Shield 7000 is rated extra heavy duty on the Robinson Floor Test, and is an ANSI A118.12 rated anti-fracture membrane offering crack isolation protection up to 1/4-inch. Composed of recycled materials, it has even been designated as a “green
building” product that earns environmental LEED credits.

Gary Linza, general manager of Mer-Krete Systems, saw the potential for a product such as Sound Shield 7000 and helped to spearhead its development.

**Sound protection and sound bond**

“I talked with many people who provided valuable input, and we ran extensive R&D tests,” Linza recalled. “The key was to get a product that effectively reduced sound and also provided a good, reliable bond. A polyester fabric layer on each side of the mat enhances its adhesive strength. With its thickness of only 1/8-inch, Sound Shield 7000 is thinner and lighter, yet also stronger than conventional underlays.”

Mer-Krete recommends applying Sound Shield 7000 as a complete system, in concert with the Mer-Krete Thin-Set 801, when large tiles are involved. So Creative Touch Interiors is applying a combination of Mer-Krete Thin-Set 705 ProSet Plus and, for tiles measuring 14 inches or more, Thin-Set 801. Mer-Krete grouts are being utilized with all of the tiles. Self-curing 801, a polymer-modified fast-setting mortar developed to meet the strict standards of ANSI A-118.4, exhibits outstanding bond strength without any shrinkage when placed between two dense impermeable surfaces such as granite or porcelain tile.

“Sound-reducing materials such as Sound Shield 7000 are usually non-porous, by virtue of what they’re designed to do,” said Tim McDonald, vice president of ParexLaHabra, Mer-Krete brands. “So when you lay a vitreous type of material on it, there’s no room for moisture to escape. This can ultimately destroy the thin-set’s prop-
properties. That’s why Mer-Krete Thin-Set 801 is so crucial to achieving the longest-lasting, most reliable performance.”

The Sound Shield 7000 system has given Creative Touch Interiors tremendous confidence in meeting its installation timetable as well as its high standards. “As a world-class design center and one-stop shop for flooring, countertops, cabinets, window treatments and more, Creative Touch Interiors has worked on numerous residential and high-rise projects,” said Ringer. “We’re always pleased to discover the best, most efficient ways of completing our job successfully. Mer-Krete Sound Shield 7000 provides us with an excellent solution for minimizing sound between floors and maintaining that sense of quality so important to the Vantage Pointe image.”

Sound Shield 7000 is one of many underfloor products that have made the Mer-Krete brand one of the industry’s most respected. Mer-Krete Systems’ popular waterproofing and crack isolation membranes, thin-set mortars, underlayments and grouts have been applied in many well-known commercial buildings and retail centers, including some of Las Vegas’ most famous resort casinos.
The grand plan is for the Vantage Pointe condominiums and retail tower to attain that same lofty status, as a city landmark in its own right. At the very least, this ambitious new development should establish itself as an exciting new residential address in the heart of a burgeoning downtown district. Now, thanks to Mer-Krete’s Sound Shield 7000 underfloor system, the project can begin to make history…quietly…floor by floor.

Sleek tile floors add to the beauty of the residences.

Adhesive application sets stage for laying down Sound Shield 7000.

Acoustical caulking at wall perimeter assists with sound reduction.