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The Lark hotel in Bozeman, Montana was transformed by Bridger Steel.

Building a Gateway

Bridger Steel's siding and roofing panels look great and last long.

By Mike Thomas

There are lots of lodgings in Bozeman, Montana, but none as unique as an eye-popping establishment called **The Lark**. Located on Main Street in Bozeman, it was created using the skeleton of a long shuttered motel that had seen better days.

Phase one of the rehab was completed three years ago; phase two is slated to wrap in July. From the start, 22-year-old Montana-based **Bridger Steel** has supplied the roofing and exterior panels—Ultra Batten panels in a Bonderized finish and custom panels in Old Town Gray—that comprise a large portion of the Lark's exterior and help it stand out from the competition.

"In the downtown core of Bozeman, one of the design guidelines is to have durable materials that can stand the test of time," says **Erik Nelson**, one of the Lark's architects and cofounder of **THINKTANK Design Group**.



▲ Metal also blends well with materials like wood and board form concrete at the Lark.

BENEFITS OF BRIDGER

With Bridger's panels, durability also means cost savings. Not only is the material itself cheaper than many other cladding and siding options—which is particularly advantageous for projects (like the Lark) with an expansive surface area that needs covering—it's longer lasting and maintenance-free, which also saves money down the road on repairs caused by leaks, mold, and rot. Bridger's panels come with a 40-year warranty.

Sustainability, too, has become an increasingly important facet of Bridger's work, and it doesn't hurt that steel is 100% recyclable—scraps included. As Bridger's technical product specialist **Chris Babcock** explains, nearly all of the company's projects are formed on-site from a contractor's cut list, which eliminates potentially wasteful guesswork.

"If we have a panel that's modified," he says, "if they have to cut a hole in it, that hole goes into scrap and then that's recycled. So there is very little construction waste. That's probably the number one sustainable feature of steel. There isn't any product waste, and if there is, then somebody missed it."

In terms of energy efficiency, steel is both a good wind barrier and an effective reflector of sunlight when coated with Bridger's various metal paints (metal prints and natural finishes are available as well). Those qualities are particularly useful in warm weather conditions, and some of Bridger's products have even earned the Energy Star label.

THE EVOLUTION

But Bridger Steel's metal panels aren't just an option for exterior and interior walls on residential and commercial projects; they're also an excellent choice for roofing. In fact, steel roofing is vastly more popular than other metal roofing metals, including tin, copper, zinc, and aluminum. Longevity-wise, it's far superior to traditional shingles. "The most you're going to get out of a shingled roofing product is 20, maybe 30 years," Babcock says. "But they're also more susceptible to hail and other weather elements that metal isn't. So when people put this on, they've really got a product for quite some time. The best analogy is when you see an old barn with a corrugated steel roof. Even though it may look rusted, that level of protection is still there. It doesn't compromise."

While metal has yet to be widely accepted for use in residential roofing, Babcock says there's been a huge evolution in terms of siding. "Especially in the past two or three years, you have to applaud people for their innovation. It's really incredible," he says.

Aside from being durable, economical, and sustainable, modern metal siding and roofing—made of galvanized, galvalume, or weathering steel—has evolved tremendously from a design perspective. Bridger's offerings include numerous gauges, styles, and colors to suit any function and vision. "There's not just the standard old panel that you screw on," Babcock

PHOTO: DAN ARMSTRONG



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says. "The architect has a vision and we're able to create that for them. We're allowing a creative element that not a lot of other products can."

REINTERPRETING AN OLD MOTEL

From an aesthetic standpoint, Nelson adds, metal also blends well with the other exterior materials—including wood and board form concrete, both of which are incorporated into the Lark's facade—to create an eye-popping structure that has become a local hangout as well as somewhere to rest. It is, Nelson says, "emblematic of a very progressive piece of architecture and a thoughtful reinterpretation of a motor lodge."

Among the Lark's most inventive features, balcony fins made from Bonderized metal (galvanized G90) reflect car headlights away from the building to eliminate a common motel nuisance and enhance the privacy of guests.

"It's added so much to downtown," Babcock says of the Lark. "On a summer evening, it's the greatest thing to walk downtown and to remember the old gas station that used to sit on the corner that is now a shop and all the reuse in this bright new entrance to what I consider our Main Street. It becomes almost a gateway. And the people standing outside the Lark, waiting for ice cream or just enjoying the facility—it's the most warm and inviting place and you're like, 'I want to be a part of that.'" **gb&d**

WHY IT MATTERS

Made from American steel, Bridger Steel's roofing and exterior/interior panels are durable, economical, sustainable, and versatile. Not only do they last far longer than traditional siding and roofing materials (up to 200 years for metal roofs versus 20 to 30 years for traditional ones) with no decrease in strength, they're often cheaper, maintenance-free, and can help save a significant amount on utility costs by keeping structures cooler in warm weather and warmer in cold weather.

Environmentally friendly, Bridger's steel panels are 100% recyclable and meet the requirements of a LEED certified project material. Whereas an average 2,000-square-foot home requires 40 to 50 trees, steel-centric homes use the equivalent of about six scrapped cars.

Functionally and aesthetically, Bridger's large variety of versatile products means there's a good fit for all residential, light commercial, architectural, interior, and agricultural applications.

