

PROGRESSIVEGROCCER

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Floor Show

Eneref Institute examines how a 13-store grocery chain, based in Defiance, OH, opts for polished concrete, an attractive flooring system with low maintenance costs.

In a grocery store halfway between Fort Wayne, Ind., and Toledo, Ohio, a new trend may be taking shape. Chief Super Markets, a 13-store grocer based in Defiance, Ohio, has just installed a flooring system that some believe is a green alternative to the daily costs of maintaining tile floors.

“The green factor was just part of our decision,” says Chief’s facility manager, Mark Diller, about his new sustainable floor. “We don’t have to replace floor tile anymore. We don’t have to wax the floor. There are just less maintenance items, other than mopping.”

Chief was remodeling an 8,000-square-foot section of its existing store in Napoleon, Ohio, and wanted to experiment with polished concrete flooring. For solutions, Diller contacted QuestMark Flooring, based in nearby Canonsburg, Pa.

DiamondQuest, QuestMark’s polished concrete flooring system is a multistep progressively finer grinding process that transforms an existing concrete floor surface into an entirely new floor with a stunning sheen. While DiamondQuest has been specified mostly by larger companies - more than 10 million square feet of flooring in 2009, nationwide - QuestMark says that of late, more and more midsize

and smaller grocers are asking for polished concrete flooring.

The savings in maintenance is one reason for the technology’s popularity. For facility managers who need to squeeze every penny they can out of re-

builds up and needs to be stripped off.

Polished concrete, on the other hand, is inherently easy to clean. That’s because the polishing process reduces the surface area, or pores, that dirt can get trapped in. The floor has a flat, smooth surface texture, so the dirt stays on top. It even requires less soap. And it’s more sanitary than tile because polished concrete has no seams or joint lines to hold dirt.

Acidic foods dropped on the floor, however, such as jarred pickles, may stain a polished concrete floor if not neutralized or cleaned within a reasonable amount of time.



The ease of maintenance of the polished concrete floor was the primary benefit for Chief Super Markets.

pairs and maintenance budgets, VCT, or tile, has a costly burden. Typically, the wax coat on top of VCT is burnished, buffed and burnished again to maintain its shine. But periodically the coat

The good news is that the areas where stains may occur are limited to only a couple of spots, typically less than a few percent age points of a store’s sales floor. According to John

Kasik, who was in charge of the Chief's project for QuestMark, a simple quarterly maintenance system that reconditions the floor solves stain issues.

town, Pa., polished concrete floors contribute to LEED points in at least three categories. In the Energy and Atmosphere category, polished concrete

“We don’t have to replace floor tile anymore. We don’t have to wax the floor. There are just less maintenance items.” – Mark Diller, Chief Supermarkets.

And while some grocers may be waiting for the flooring industry to sort out issues, several leading grocers have been employing polished concrete for years, and therefore obviously believe the savings on maintenance and the superior shine transcend the current minor annoyances.

In fact, the trend toward lower maintenance and sustainability is what Diller says inspired him. “Doing what the big boys are doing” is how he characterizes the move to polished concrete.

Initially, QuestMark created a sample patch before Chief completely committed itself to the new flooring system. A few aisles were polished each night so that store operations weren't affected. QuestMark striped off the tile, performed a full concrete polish and applied a collared penetrating brown-tone dye.

The entire process “caused very little inconvenience to our customers,” according to Diller.

Both the installation and maintenance of polished concrete floors have positive sustainable benefits. According to The Eneref Institute (www.eneref.org), based in Doyles-

doesn't employ VOC materials, and the sheen actually increases the room's ambient light. In the Materials and Resources category, the technology increases the lifespan of the already existing concrete floors. And innovation in Design may offer a third potential LEED credit.

For most retailers, the low maintenance cost and consistent shine are the greatest advantages to polished concrete. Dull spots on tile give a dirty appearance to the floor. Additionally, it's no secret to any retailer that a dirty-looking floor hinders sales. No other reason ably priced flooring system is as consistently shiny as polished concrete. And if a consistent shine increases sales, that's the bottom line. ●



This article is an excerpt of the future Eneref report which assesses the im-

pediments to building zero-energy urban communities in the US. A companion film documentary, The Eneref Project, will seek to demonstrate to key decision-makers how zero-energy communities can be commercially viable.