Fairfield Library
Henrico, Virginia

CUPACLAD® systems have been designed and developed by CUPA GROUP
Photos by Eco Supply Center
Designed by the collaboration of Boston’s Tappe’ Architects and BCWH Architects of Richmond, Virginia, the new Henrico (Virginia) County Public Library provides a center of opportunity and learning for its local community. The design team held several neighborhood stakeholder meetings to generate a solution responding to desires and aspirations of the surrounding population. Core facility spaces were to focus on teaching life skills and family connectedness, ideals the community was delighted to focus upon.

Construction on the two-story, 44,803-square-foot building began on its 10-acre, Fairfield, Virginia site in June of 2018, with an expected completion date to occur in autumn of 2019. This $29 million library project features an extremely modern design that, according to county officials, represents a huge upgrade from the original Fairfield Library, which opened in 1976 and was just 24,000 square feet in size. County officials will seek LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Silver certification status for the library; the LEED program, operated by the U.S. Green Building Council, recognizes facilities that are environmentally friendly.

Henrico County is located in the Humid Subtropical Climate Zone, with hot and humid summers and moderately cold winters. To combat the county’s wide ranging climatic extremes, the CupaClad® Parallel 101 System was specified for the exterior of the library. As it turned out, luckily the CupaClad® system was ideal for conditions such as these, so certain areas could be prepped while other areas were yet to be preparation-ready. Even with all the challenges the project faced, from start to finish, the entire slate façade was installed in just twelve weeks. The architects were elated with the overall production process, and according to Berk, mentioned “a number of times” that CupaClad® slate was everything they were after!

Ken Rule, CEO of The Vermont Slate Company, which partners with Spain’s Cupa organization, summed up the vast advantages offered by the CupaClad® System. “The materials are 100% sustainable. Unlike artificial products, skilled craftsmen handcraft our natural slate, with no additional surface treatment required. Additionally, our systems are quick and easy to install by any facade contractors. Once installed, the slate is permanently fixed in a safe manner; therefore, no maintenance is ever needed.

Earlier in this article, you read that the local community was in favor of its residents going to the new library to be taught “life skills and family connectedness.” Doesn’t it make sense… that these two noble subjects can be learned within a haven that will always look inviting… and due to its well-thought-out exterior construction strategies, will protect its visitors from extreme climate change year-round?

It’s true that there are all kinds of substitutes for just about every kind of exterior cladding. But there is no substitute for the look, the quality, the value AND the longevity, which a natural slate rainscreen façade offers. Not one.