



An impressive 30-foot high concrete segmental retaining wall maximizes land use near the St. Charles, Missouri mixed-use development.

# The Streets of St. Charles: A Gateway to Historic Community



(ABOVE) THE COVER OF A VINTAGE BROCHURE FOR 1967'S NOAH'S ARK RESTAURANT AND MOTOR INN. THE STRUCTURE WAS DEMOLISHED IN 2006 TO MAKE WAY FOR "THE STREETS OF ST. CHARLES" DEVELOPMENT.

**For decades, an odd artifact greeted** visitors headed into historic St. Charles, Missouri: a giant restaurant designed to mimic Noah's Ark. Today, the former site of the kitchzy 1960's structure is home to an upscale mixed-use community which utilizes a number of hardscape products from **Midwest Block and Brick**.

"A lot of cities go through transformations," says Midwest's Mark Wilhelms. "In this case, there was an old restaurant and hotel literally at the front door of historic Main Street in St. Charles. The city wanted to recognize the history of where Lewis and Clark started the exploration to the west coast, but they also wanted to be seen as a modern contemporary city. So, this plot of land was a prime spot for the new development, The Streets of St. Charles."

## The Great Wall of Saint Charles

One of the first challenges in redeveloping the 27-acre site was the construction of an impressive 30-foot high concrete segmental retaining wall. "There was a massive slope that required a very large retaining wall to maximize land usage," says Wilhelms. "I've seen big walls that are plain concrete along





Above: Rosetta Hardscape's Belvedere ties in well with the VERSA-LOK® Mosaic Wall.

a highway and they look very institutional, very flat, no life to them. The city knew that they didn't want a wall like that. It would just destroy the look and feel of what they're trying to achieve along the Missouri River. So the city and the developer went back and forth to find a solution that provided an aesthetically pleasing wall for the community."

The material finally chosen for the wall was VERSA-LOK® Mosaic, a 3-piece concrete segmental retaining wall system manufactured by Midwest Block. "In this case, each unit is tumbled to give it an aged, weathered look," says Wilhelms. "The system is made up of three different sizes that are installed in a pattern. Even though it looks like a very complex random pattern on the wall, it's very easy for the contractor to install. There's a simple four-unit pattern that allows for optimum spacing to attach the geo synthetic reinforcing to the wall."

### Product Consistency

Wilhelms says the original wall was completed in 2012 and continues to reflect the careful design and workmanship that went into creating the structure. "The engineering and landscape architects from Cole Design Group worked together to ensure that the retaining wall would meet both the structural and aesthetic requirements for the project. The contractor did a phenomenal job building the distinctive serpentine wall curves. The layout and attention to detail was beautiful. The blending, placement, the technical aspects of the construction, the backfill that supports the residence pool and buildings--everything really came together to make this massive wall fit perfectly into the community."

As the project expanded its footprint, developers later added new sections to the original wall. "They were really pleased with the consistency of color between the first and the second wall--the consistency of building two walls at two separate times. It's a great testament to the production quality and the consistency the units have over time," says Wilhelms.

David Mudd, hardscape sales representative for Midwest, agrees. "What struck me was remembering that the original wall was five years old," says Mudd. "That shows the precision with which the Versa-Lok product was manufactured and installed."

### Rosetta® Belvedere Collection

In later phases, developers worked to tie-in Rosetta Belvedere, a manmade product that replicates the look of weathered fieldstone. "Installers married the continuation of the original Versa-Lok Mosaic wall with Rosetta for high visibility signage, landscape beds, and so forth," says Mudd.

He notes that Rosetta Belvedere is ideal for projects that require high-end aesthetics and speedy installation on a tight budget. "They originally wanted saw-cut natural stone; that was going to be anywhere from \$50 to \$100 per square foot. Rosetta is a wet-cast concrete product that's great looking at a very competitive price point."

### Midwest: A Design Resource

Developers also looked to Midwest for complementary concrete products for use in other aspects of the desirable community. Additional hardscape products used in the development include concrete interlocking pavers specifically designed to stand-up to heavy vehicular traffic and unique pre-cast bio-retention basins. "Even though they're different products for different applications, there's still a continuity of materials and color blends," says Mudd. "The entire site is really designed to have curb appeal right on arrival."

Today, the development is a prime destination for retail, dining, and entertainment while offering hotel accommodations, residences and office space. The Streets of St. Charles is owned and managed by Cullinan Properties, Ltd.

"We wanted to be a partner with the developers and the design team to help them realize their vision while still being mindful of schedule, budget and other constraints," Mudd says. "We're excited to be that resource, doing everything we can to avoid having to tell our customer: no, that's not a stock item; we can't help you. We work very hard to figure out if there's any way for us to provide that solution. I know that's something we take pride in here at Midwest Block and Brick."