

MIDWEST

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BUILDING



Redefining
pre-engineered
buildings



Tanner Honda

Redefining the pre-engineered steel building



Tanner Companies in Brainerd renovated an existing auto dealership for a new facility that would conform to the Honda Dealership Image Program (HDIP). The theme of Honda's design philosophy was to "redefine the Honda experience" with the following goals:

- Establish a consistent image where there was no consistency.
- Create a customer-friendly environment where there was apprehension.
- Enhance dealership efficiency and capacity to prepare for the future.
- Create a unique shopping experience and inspire loyalty.

John Tanner was not convinced, however, that Honda's prototype HDIP blueprints would fit with the needs of his employees or customers. While Tanner was contemplating his options, he learned that a major road construction project would be taking place during his dealership construction. This would result in road construction on three sides of the Tanner Honda property. Construction plans were put on hold until it was determined how much of the owner's property would be lost to the road construction as the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the City of Brainerd negotiated the right-of-way boundaries. The owner ultimately decided to take advantage of the road construction and eliminate several older buildings on the prop-

erty and proceed with a new Honda building that would provide better visibility and customer access.

According to Honda, "other than our great products, there is no clearer way to show off our quality than through our dealership facilities." It was evident, however, that the majority of the HDIP prototypes were intended for larger markets and simply would not fit the owner's property or operating methods. In the car dealership business for 30-plus years, Tanner had specific ideas regarding the design, layout, and features he wanted incorporated into the new building, which would be constructed as a pre-engineered steel building. It was the goal of Kuepers' architectural staff to create a plan that would please both the owner and Honda. The architectural staff received an HDIP manual to provide them with design ideas and planning guidance. Essential elements of the HDIP design included

- the entry cylinder with Honda "H" logo
- the Honda Wave, a curved edge canopy with upswing "smile" at the end
- curvilinear shapes to create a unique image and define functional spaces that flow easily to one another
- a color palette of specified colors for interior/exterior walls and furnishings to complement the Honda Blue
- roadside signage designed for consistency in design, color scheme, and curvilinear shape
- building signage with specific guidelines for placement and fascia type/size. Patterns and materials used at >>



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the building exterior were chosen to showcase the signage by providing a suitable backdrop highlighting the essential image elements

- service center placement near front of facility to give the same degree of courtesy, respect, and professionalism to the customers as demonstrated in sales areas
- showroom areas, reception, information center, kids' play area, vehicle displays, and sales consultation stations designed to create an inviting, nonthreatening customer environment

The Kuepers' architectural staff came up with a preliminary design for the pre-engineered steel building, tailoring the HDIP design elements with Tanner's requirements. Negotiations between Honda's architect in California, the owner, and Kuepers' architectural staff went back and forth until the parties involved arrived at an agreeable design.

Obstacles to Overcome

Zoning — During the preliminary plan review process with the city, it was discovered that the previous dealership did not have the necessary zoning classification changes to the property. The property was zoned industrial rather than commercial. As a result, formal rezoning process resulted in a one-month delay in the start of the project.

Steel Crisis — Financial strife in the chosen steel building supplier's company changed initial delivery time from six to eight

weeks to more than 14 weeks. This instability of the company led to a last-minute decision to find another steel building supplier who could fulfill the contract and meet the timetable. Design and engineering processes previously initiated with the first company had to be repeated with the subsequent steel building supplier.

Site Work — One of the early goals was to complete the exterior concrete and base course of paving prior to winter. Before this could begin, extensive site work had to be accomplished. An existing 50x100 pole building on the property was dismantled and donated to a local nonprofit group. Originally, the site had been used as a concrete ready-mix plant (thus the industrial zoning), and one corner of the property had been used as a dumping ground for unused concrete — 2,907 cubic yards of concrete rubble had to be removed from the site. A fiber optic line also had to be moved before site grading and building excavation could begin.

Construction Phase — Concrete work began in the fall. By the end of September, the storm sewer system was being installed and underground rough-in utilities and inflammable waste system were under way. By October, the concrete slab and sidewalks were being poured. When the steel building contractor's progress in setting the steel began to lag, it had to increase the size of its crew to get back on schedule.

Rains and early snows also put the paving contractor behind schedule, but by the end of October, the base course of paving was placed. Landscaping crews were planting trees and shrubs at the perimeter of the parking lot. This gave the owner more

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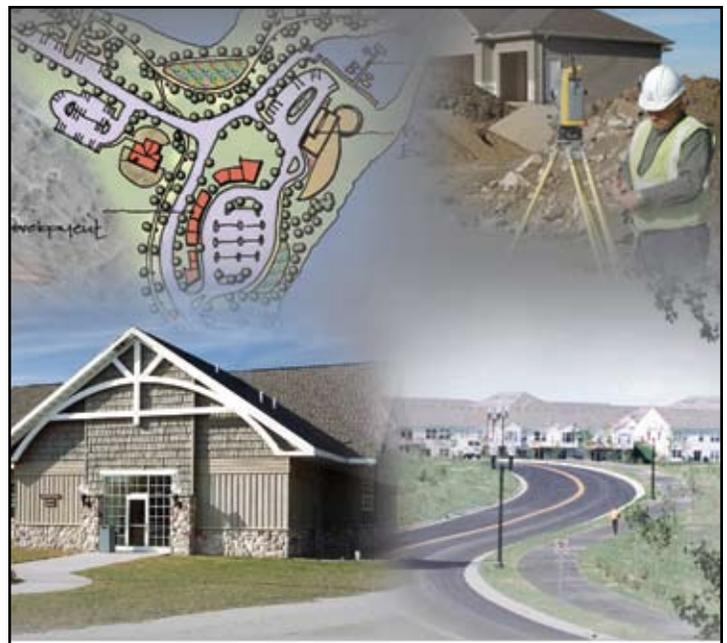
usable space for displaying car inventory during the remainder of construction.

Changes to materials and design were implemented throughout the project. The architectural staff was concerned that decorative tiles specified for the exterior of the building could pose a water penetration issue. Due to the fluctuating weather of northern Minnesota, water penetration and freezing temperatures could cause the tiles to pop out of place. Plastic architectural panels in gray were substituted for the tiles. Routers were used to create grooves in the panels and the grooves were filled with grout for a simulated tile effect. Another concern was the design and structural support of the Honda Wave. Changing to a tubular steel construction will prevent snow from accumulating on the canopy.

By midwinter, interior work was well under way. The project had been designed to meet Uniform Building Codes, but changes were required during construction when the International Building Codes went into effect.

Owner-requested changes were also made during construction to the service department area. The size of the oil storage room was increased, and insulation was added to the walls to reduce the noise of the air compressor. An oil and air distribution system was also added to each service bay.

By early spring, the new state-of-the-art Honda dealership was substantially completed. The final numbers for this cost-plus project were within less than 1 percent of the original cost estimate. 



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