



Skyline Lodge

Highlands, NC, USA



Project Information

Project category:
Tourism/Wellness

Year of construction:
2021

Year of MAPEI involvement:
2021

MAPEI coordinator:
Dave Kocienda

Project owner:
Derick Hipp

Architects:
Mey & co and David Thompson Studio

General contractor:
Beverly-Grant, Inc.

Tile and stone installer:
Tile-it, Inc.

Project manager:
Jared Hipp

Photographer:
Joseph Kocienda

Project size:
8,000 sq. ft. (743 m²)



Project Overview

MAPEI's **Mapeheat**™ radiant floor-heating system adds an extra touch of luxury to a five-star lodge.



Products Used

- ECO Prim Grip™**
- Keraflex™ Plus**
- Mapeheat Cable**
- Mapeheat Membrane**
- Mapeheat Thermo Touch**
- Mapelath™**
- Ultraplan® Easy**



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Jazz-Age Design and Modern-Age Luxury

High among the mountains of North Carolina's Highlands, the Skyline Lodge nestles among the pines like a cool run of jazz on a hot day. The instant that you see the lodge, you know that you are looking at a piece of history – a design from an era when discoveries seemed to happen every day, optimism was boundless and Ella Fitzgerald's smoky voice filled the air (along with the scent of bootleg gin).

Built in 1929, the lodge's long, angular lines were designed by the famed architect Arthur Kelsey, who was one of Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin Apprentices. And Wright's design influence echoes not only in the exterior lines, but also in the interior design.

"The owners, The Indigo Road Hospitality Group, are known for five-star hospitality, and this property is no exception. Set in a picturesque location with the ability to provide guests with off-property experiences such as scavenger hunts and off-road excursions, this will be a crown jewel in their portfolio," explained MAPEI sales representative David Kocienda.

In fact, the property is in the process of a remodel to bring the nearly century-old wooden structure up to The Indigo Road Hospitality Group's exacting standards. "The interior is being built out and decorated with pieces that are period-correct, right down to the fittings," Kocienda said.

Just as Frank Lloyd Wright designed furniture to fit his properties, so too do the furniture and accessories in the

Skyline Lodge match the design ethos: "Jazz Age" meets "Modern Luxury." Sleek lines and lots of wood abound. "But the one period-correct element that was giving them pause was the tile floors in the bathrooms," Kocienda stated.

Each of the 40 guest rooms features a bathroom with heated tile floors – a period-correct design that is combined with modern comfort. "Unfortunately, the heat mats that were originally specified could not be used with the penny-round tiles that the owners wanted to install. Penny rounds are not typically used with uncoupling membranes," Kocienda continued. "That is when Derrick Hipp, the owner of Tile-it, Inc., the installing contractor, reached out to MAPEI. He knew about our *Mapeheat* system and wanted to know if it would work with the penny rounds."

"A tisket, a tasket, MAPEI is in your basket..."

The owners of the Skyline Lodge want their guests to experience Jazz-Age luxury with all the modern amenities, and they were unwilling to forego either point – the penny rounds or the heated floors. But, as Mike Granatowski, MAPEI Corporation's Director of Architectural and Commercial Projects, always says, "MAPEI has never met a job for which we could not devise a solution." And, this was a perfect case in point.

Hipp reached out to Kocienda, and they sent the specification to MAPEI's Technical Services Department to find the exact solution. As expected, MAPEI



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provided a system solution to keep the project moving forward and to keep the bathroom installations as specified – penny rounds with heated flooring.

“The system that was specified was designed to address not only the situation with the penny rounds, but also the wood-floor substrate, which was not in great condition,” Kocienda stated. “In fact, as some of the floors were removed, there were unexpected damages that were discovered. But remember, we’re talking about 100-year-old wooden bathroom floors.”

A 10-man crew from Tile-it, Inc., addressed the bathroom-flooring issues by first applying **ECO Prim Grip**, a multipurpose, bond-promoting primer that is designed to enhance the performance of self-leveling underlayments. Next, they applied **Mapelath**, a lightweight, non-corroding, alkali-resistant synthetic lath.

On top of the primed wood and the lath, the crew applied **Ultraplan Easy**, a high-performance, quick-setting, easy-preparation, self-leveling underlayment. “The great thing about this SLU is that it only needs a clean, primed substrate before it is applied,” Kocienda said. “It is designed to be used with or without surface profiling, is low-VOC and is very quick-setting. Tile can be installed in as few as three hours.”

With a flat, even surface, the crew used **Keraflex Plus** – a professional, extra smooth, large-and-heavy-tile mortar with polymer – to install **Mapeheat Membrane**. Part of MAPEI’s *Mapeheat* radiant floor-heating system, *Mapeheat Membrane* is a lightweight uncoupling, crack-isolation and waterproofing membrane that is designed for electrical floor heating. Each membrane is cut to size to fit the parameters of the room. The membrane features rounded square reliefs into which the *Mapeheat* heating cable snaps.

“Once the heating cable was snapped into place, the crew applied *Ultraplan Easy* at least 1/4” [6 cm] above the membrane,” Kocienda stated. Once the SLU cured, another level of *Keraflex Plus* was installed on top of the *Ultraplan Easy* along with the penny rounds and grout. This installation featured the



Mapeheat Thermo Touch thermostat, a 7-day programmable thermostat that includes a 3.5” (9 cm) color touchscreen display for accessing the super-intuitive user interface and energy use monitor.

“It was a real Dagwood sandwich of a solution,” Kocienda explained, using a term popularized in the comic strips of the 1920s. (Note: A Dagwood sandwich is named for Dagwood Bumstead from the “Blondie” comic strip. Dagwood always enjoyed a sandwich comprised of a half-dozen meats and cheeses, as well as pickles and vegetables. In short, a lot of ingredients make a delicious sandwich.)

Using a few products in a precise series of steps, MAPEI’s Technical Services had created the perfect system solution to the heated-flooring dilemma.

Now, when guests return to the Skyline Lodge, the sounds of Ella Fitzgerald will once again waft through the halls. The clink of ice cubes and the splash of gin (albeit legal now) will accompany the guests’ laughter as they enjoy the gorgeous mountain views. And, when the mountain air starts to bite, the chill will leave the penny-round tile flooring and be replaced with warmth and comfort, thanks to *Mapeheat* radiant floor heating and MAPEI.

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