

Innovative Vinyl Siding Helps Define a Rustic, Upscale Scene



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Tom Oot
President, Oot Brothers



The scenic lakes, gently rolling hills and mature hardwood forests of central New York make it a year-round outdoor paradise. Here, with an area just under 80 square miles, Oneida Lake is the largest body of water within the state, and a historically popular home for nature-lovers and vacationers.

Nestled on the south shore of the lake, a short drive from Syracuse, the 92-unit Harbor Lights community by Oot Brothers Inc. is among the area's latest residential developments,



providing homeowners with maintenance-free, luxurious living, including direct access to the water. The duplex townhomes feature amenities such as walkout basements, decks up to 36 ft., high-end cabinetry and countertops, and options like an elevator and in-floor radiant heat.

Homeowners also have an individual dock with power, water and cable TV that can accommodate a 40-ft. yacht. Connected to the Erie Canal, boaters enjoy truly long sails, the challenge of hearty bass and walleye fishing, and easy floating under golden sunsets.

With nature being such a key component of the lifestyle here, the exterior cladding Oot Brothers uses, The Foundry Siding, is a perfect match for the area and its climate. The siding's detailed texture recreates the beauty of natural cedar, but with the durability of premium vinyl. "You can't tell, unless you're within a foot or two, that it's not natural cedar. That's authentic," says Tom Oot, president of Oot Brothers. Harbor Lights is his company's third multi-family community specifying Foundry siding. Homeowners have a choice of several neutral shades

among the Foundry's 40+ colors to finish their home.

While many area residents enjoy winter and its activities, the season is brutal on homes. "With our weather the way it is – the severe winters and cold, and also the humidity changes – it's the right product," says Ray Leonard, construction superintendent at Oot Bros. "Our focus is on being maintenance-free. It doesn't make sense anymore to go with wood siding. It's gorgeous, but there's constant maintenance."

Manufactured by The Tapco Group, Foundry Shakes and Shingles obtain their realism through a manufacturing process using more than 100 different molds cast from real cedar. The 7-in. exposure shingle selected for Harbor Lights features a mill-sawn appearance complete with random saw marks.

Oot Bros. builds predominantly planned unit developments with homeowners associations that provide perpetual upkeep. "Right up front, it's very important that we pick good products that will hold up in the long run. These projects are going to be self-sustaining," says Oot.

Now in its third generation, Oot

Bros. is central New York's oldest and largest builder, having constructed more than a hundred communities. "We're probably in the range of 15,000 homes built," Oot says, noting that some are design-build projects also featuring Foundry siding. "Its quality suits higher-end homes. We can put The Foundry on a million-dollar home without any reservations, and we have."

The builder's first experience using the siding was as replacement material for a 500-unit townhouse project in Manlius, NY. "The original cedar there hasn't held up as well as anticipated. Some units are more than 20 years old. Rather than replace that cedar with new cedar, we've been replacing it with The Foundry product, and it matches very well. That whole project will ultimately be redone in the Foundry over the next couple of decades," Oot says.

"That painting bill is also a problem,"

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he adds. "We've had to paint the cedar on the units every four years. The paint alone is over half a million dollars. That's an expense that can be eliminated just by switching out to a maintenance-free product like The Foundry.

"For most people, I don't think cedar's a realistic alternative. I haven't done a cedar home in five years. It's not cost effective, and the maintenance issue is prohibitive," Oot says. "People just don't want maintenance, bottom line."

His company has also seen differences in comparison to other vinyl and fiber cement. "Waste factor is very

minimal compared to competitive products that have higher waste and higher cost. With other vinyl shingles, when you cut it at an angle as in a gable application, it's very difficult to work with, whereas the Foundry product has solved a lot of those problems in the installation," Oot explains.

"What's impressive," Leonard adds, "is that The Foundry doesn't have the characteristics of typical vinyl siding. Much of vinyl here expands and contracts a lot because of our extreme temperature changes, and you can see it. In the summer, you'll drive by a 12-ft. double 5" and you can see it ac-





tually buckling and waving. It can be very noticeable, while The Foundry looks more like natural siding.”

Oot’s also noticed problems with other panels. “Traditional vinyl is a thinner gauge. Structurally, it works fine, but if you get a twisted stud or a bowed stud in a wall, it shows up a lot more. The Foundry doesn’t reveal any of those issues,” he says.

“We do some work with fiber cement, but it still has a maintenance requirement with painting,” Leonard notes. “It’s a slight improvement over wood, but it’s just not going to last like The Foundry.

“We recommend Foundry siding. The 5’ panels are easily handled. It has a great look with the textured grain, it’s high-quality and it’s easy to install. We’re very happy with it,” says Leonard.

“People who want the look of cedar really have few options,” Oot says. “The Foundry for their dollar is the best choice. It’s competitively priced. We know the manufacturer stands behind its product 100 percent, and I think that’s just as important as anything.”



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