

# Glass towers rest on a base of stone

*The glossy, futuristic exterior of the Gannett/USA Today headquarters sits on a foundation of natural stone*

by Arnold Kim



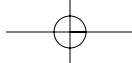
Although the Gannett/USA Today Headquarters in McLean, VA, is predominantly clad in glass, the landscaping features fieldstone walls of Carderock Stone from Tri-State Stone and Building Supply.

One quick look at the Gannett/USA Today headquarters in McLean, VA, reveals a building made from steel and glass, representing the finest in high-tech architecture. However, a closer look shows that the 21<sup>st</sup> century structure sits

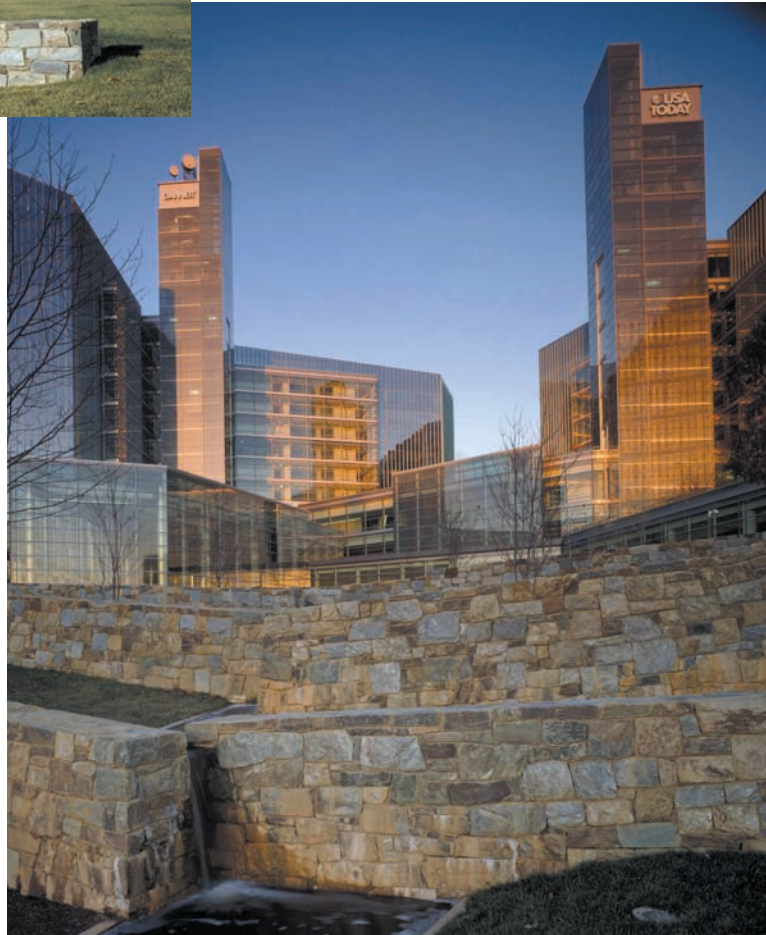
on a base made from materials as old as the earth itself.

The design of the facility was conceived by Kohn Pedersen Fox (KPF) of New York. A recurring pattern in the project is the use of contrast, whether it is in texture or color. One of the most

visible examples of this can be found in the fieldstone walls that are used throughout the grounds of the facility. These rough-faced fieldstone walls stand in sharp contrast to the smooth, glossy surfaces of the buildings themselves. The walls are comprised of Carderock



The fieldstone walls can be found throughout the building site, and they help connect the project to the earth.



The architects at Kohn Pedersen Fox were partial to the warm tones of the fieldstone, which is enhanced at certain times of the day.

stone, quarried nearby in Bethesda, MD, by Tri-State Stone and Building Supply.

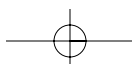
In addition to providing contrast, the fieldstone connects the project to the landscape. According to Senior Designer Jerri Smith of KPF, the use of fieldstone walls create an effect where “the building appears to be literally coming out of the landscape.” The tone of the fieldstone also provided warmer colors for the complex.

Other exterior materials included Jet

Mist granite, which was used for the paving as well as the caps and lintels at the fieldstone base; and Absolute Black granite, which was used in a polished format for the base and the complex’s outdoor lotus pond.

The interior public spaces of the complex also make extensive use of natural stone. The flooring in the lobby and atrium is a combination of honed Cherokee and Solar Gray marble from the Georgia Marble Co. of Tate, GA. The

architects liked the light tone of the white Cherokee marble, as they felt it would effectively reflect the natural light coming in from outdoors, and Smith added that the Solar Gray’s surface “suggested the image of tree branch shadows amidst sunlight.” In addition to the marble flooring, the lobby and atrium includes polished Absolute Black granite for the wall bases and fixtures as well as Emerald Pearl granite for the elevators and vanities.





Other stones used inside the building include Absolute Black and Emerald Pearl granite.



Emerald Pearl granite was used for the treads of the "Harp Stair," which seeks to combine modern technology with a natural feel.

One of the most prominent uses of Emerald Pearl granite was the "Harp Stair." Using modern technology, the designers set out to create a 7-foot-wide stairway supported with steel. However, with the use of 18-inch-deep solid treads

of polished Emerald Pearl granite, the stair echoed naturalism with its solid stone feel. KPF cited the great deal of depth that Emerald Pearl granite provides when polished, as well as the consistency it provided in tying different parts of the

building together. The material's polished finish groups well with the glass on the upper levels, but its stone qualities also reflect the fieldstone base. Also, its color matched that of its surroundings — dark like the Absolute Black used throughout



Inside the building, flooring in the lobby and atrium is a combination of honed Cherokee and Solar Gray marble from the Georgia Marble Co. of Tate, GA.

the lobby and exterior, but green like the landscaping outside.

When the complex was completed in October of 2001, the stonework was met with great enthusiasm. In addition to winning the praise of the building's patrons, the project also won professional acclaim, including a 2002 WBC Craftsmanship Award. □

**Gannett/USA Today  
McLean, VA**

*Architect:* Kohn Pedersen Fox, New York, NY  
*Landscape Architect:* Michael Vergason Landscape Architects, Arlington, VA  
*General Contractor:* The Clark Construction Group  
*Stone Suppliers:* Tri-State Stone and Building Supply, Bethesda, MD (fieldstone); The Georgia Marble Co., Tate, GA (marble)  
*Subcontractor:* Lorton Contracting

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