



NICHIHA CASE STUDY

Nichiha Becoming Turn-To Brand for High-Traffic Eateries

Cladding offers high performance for quick-service national brand locations

Florida has one of the most extreme climates in the United States. Intense sun, volatile tropical weather, and a higher hurricane risk mean that building materials must be up to the task of defending contents and occupants from water and other hazards.

Though many Sunshine State buildings and homes trust materials like stucco and exterior insulation finishing systems (EIFS), they can buckle or fail when faced with severe weather. Cladding must not only withstand years of frequent storms, but also retain its desired aesthetic.

That is how Tim Murdock, senior director of construction of QDI Construction, began partnering with Nichiha for its high-performing fiber cement solutions for exterior cladding. The company assists several national [quick service restaurant](#) (QSR) brands with their construction needs. As QDI Construction took on more projects, it became apparent that higher-quality cladding was needed for many of these establishments.

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PROJECT DETAILS

DEVELOPER

Quality Dining, Inc.

LOCATION

Ruskin, Florida

PRODUCTS

[Vintagewood](#) - Cedar

[Illumination](#) - Custom Colors

COMPLETION

2022

CHALLENGE

Update restaurants to have a more contemporary, welcoming look. Ensure locations in various climates can withstand a wide variety of weather challenges without compromising their aesthetic.

SOLUTION

A fiber cement cladding system that can be installed consistently with a smaller labor force. Offering lower maintenance, the exterior products avoid the pitfalls associated with the traditional materials they mimic.

RESULTS

QDI Construction employs Nichiha cladding on a multitude of restaurants. Consistent, high end looks are achieved that can withstand mother nature, higher traffic, and delivers exceptional return on investment.

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TIM MURDOCK, SENIOR DIRECTOR OF CONSTRUCTION, QDI CONSTRUCTION

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A More Resilient Upgrade

In short order, QDI Construction noticed how much maintenance was required for restaurants that installed stucco and EIFS. Before long, these methods were no longer an ideal approach.

“Stucco is a concrete-based material that cracks over time. If you don’t seal it, keep it painted more than normal, you’ll get water intrusion in the building,” Murdock reflected. “We’ve got a lot of stores that we built that way, and we have to go back and fix them. Once we started having that problem, we started looking at alternatives to that product.”

For QDI Construction and its clients, Nichiha’s elegant product roster offered an express route to cladding with more aesthetic options, less specialized installation methods, and a more consistent look for QSR brands that seek a uniform look between locations.

“The Nichiha product is paneled, so it covers more square footage, is easier to install, and a better look in my opinion than the brick panel or brick pieces,” said Murdock. “I think the panels are a better look, better coverage, and a better water-tight seal.”

Nichiha panels are engineered with an integrated rainscreen, a product feature that is critical on Florida’s Gulf Coast, where QDI construction is headquartered. The area sees more than 51" of precipitation annually, far more than the 38" national average.

Trusted by Global Brands

QDI Construction was tasked with installing Nichiha cladding that aligned with an aesthetic upgrade effort by Burger King. What began with [Nichiha’s VintageWood](#)

in Cedar on the restaurant’s drive-thru towers eventually grew to compose much of the building envelope.

VintageWood is part of Nichiha’s Architectural Wall Panels (AWP) product line. Nichiha AWP mimic the look of materials like wood, concrete and brick but are easily installed on a hidden track system. They feature a built-in rainscreen that offers moisture management and are ideal for commercial or residential applications.



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For the quick-serve Burger King restaurants being built by QDI Construction, the VintageWood look worked, creating a signature appearance for the exterior of restaurants in the region. After this installation, the decision to turn to Nichiha for subsequent cladding upgrades amounted to a go-forward strategy, eliminating any additional searches for a top-tier cladding option. QDI continued specifying [VintageWood](#), but began adding [Illumination](#) for other parts of the exterior of the restaurants.

“Once we started using the Nichiha through Burger King, that’s what I went straight too,” said Murdock. “I still go back to Nichiha with the way it’s installed [and] the track system it’s got. I still think it’s superior than the others.”

And the upgrade is poised to last far longer than cheaper methods.

“We’re a little different. We build for the future. We build for long-term. Others don’t. To spend the money up front for a product that’s going to last two, three times or more, longer, is well worth it.”

Lasting Looks

A vital feature of Nichiha’s resilient cladding systems is their ability to maintain their aesthetic over the long run—a welcome feature for QSRs that see heavy foot and vehicle traffic. Here, Nichiha’s 15-year limited [product warranty](#) only emboldens peace of mind.

“That’s huge for us,” Murdock reflected when talking about the durability of Nichiha AWP. “On our stores, we repaint every three to four years just to keep it looking good. That’s a huge thing for us because [Nichiha cladding] looks good in year 10 and we haven’t had to touch it other than cleaning it.”

These selling points made fans of not only the franchisees, but also the QSR employees.

“They all love the product,” said Murdock. “It looks good. It lasts.”