Article published in World Fence News, December 2015

Trex Fencing

CASE STUDY:
Burton Hills Homeowner Association

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Cost was not the only consideration

After extensive research, homeowner association chooses Trex privacy fencing to replace existing wood structure

BY EDMUND ROSE, NATIONAL SALES, FDS FENCE DISTRIBUTORS

Rio Grande Fence Company, a Nashville, Tenn.-based contractor, was selected by Burton Hills Homeowner Association to install approximately 3,400 lineal feet of Trex Seclusions privacy fencing as a replacement for existing wood fences.

Located in southwest Nashville, the Burton Hills communities consists of 460 homes, condominiums, and business properties.

The Burton Hills Homeowner Association researched various products and potential contractors for several years in anticipation of the project.

Because Burton Hills is comprised of boards from several villages, representatives from each village in Burton Hills, as well as local businesses, participated in the evaluation. A variety of materials was evaluated and Trex ultimately was selected as the best product to meet the association's needs.

Once the product was chosen, the homeowner association evaluated several contractors' bids before deciding to use Rio Grande Fence for the endeavor.

Rio Grande Fence is well known to the association, having performed projects for the community previously.

"They (Rio Grande Fence) do what they say they do," said Jack Tenzel, president of the Burton Hills HOA. "And, they weren't the low bidder. In checking for qualifications, the only one that was highly qualified was Rio Grande."

Tenzel expressed his satisfaction with the work performed, and the Trex fence product: "Quality is what you want. What we got with Rio Grande and Trex was quality," he commented.

Evaluating a fence solution

Previous to the installation of Trex, the homeowner association had installed a wood fence constructed with lattice panels. The original fence did not offer much privacy, however, and required significant upkeep as it aged.

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Cost was not the only consideration in homeowner association's fence replacement decision

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To retain the beauty of the wooded community, the association chose wood-plastic composite to provide a more characteristically natural appearance.

According to Tenzel, it took the association approximately six years to evaluate a variety of materials.

Privacy had risen as a priority for the HOA because Burton Hills is not a gated community and is situated in a densely populated area with a mix of residential and commercial properties.

Given the rising costs of maintaining the community's fencing, wood and natural barriers such as hedges were dropped early on. Masonry was considered, but the cost and property impact during installation were concerns.

Other products were evaluated but were not deemed viable due to a lack of durability or function.

Large scale projects such as perimeter fence replacement would not be possible without association reserves.

Reserves are essentially savings accounts which associations use to store funds in anticipation of future expenses.

A committee was formed by the Burton Hills HOA to perform a reserve study.

The HOA invited eight bidders. While cost was important, the HOA placed greater weight on finding the most competent contractor.

According to Debra Lewin, senior press director with the Community Association Institute, one of the key aspects of a reserve study is to determine not just the initial cost but anticipated ongoing costs and to place expected value on a component (in this case, the fence) for the current and future beneficiaries of the expenditure.

"That's the beauty of reserves – they spread out over time the cost proportionately among all who benefit from the various components," stated Lewin.

Selecting a contractor

The HOA invited eight bidders. While cost was important, the HOA placed greater weight on finding the most competent contractor. The HOA produced a packet delineating the scope of the project and requirements for fulfillment. Bidders were then invited to participate and make presentations to the board.

This is where Rio Grande Fence set itself apart.

Tenzel indicated that the professionalism and preparation on the part of Rio Grande's representatives went a long way towards establishing confidence in their ability to perform. He stated that one of the important components in the selection was a familiarity with the contractor's work and company: "Whatever you do, know who you're buying from. If you don't know that contractor, don't use them."

As demonstrated in the evaluation process undertaken by the Burton Hills HOA, the presentation stage of a bid is critically important. Boards are typically comprised of volunteers that are not likely to have much knowledge of fencing. They rely heavily on input from contractors.

A lack of professionalism or preparedness will most likely eliminate a contractor. It isn't just the contractor's representatives that leave the right impression, however. In the case of Burton Hills, clients may want to see the contractor's work.

It isn't uncommon for a board to take a field trip to visit another installation to evaluate the contractor and materials used.

The installation

The scope of the project included removal of the existing fence. The amount of waste from the old fence and shipping packaging from the new fence filled 16 dumpsters.

According to Chris Bryson, Rio Grande's project manager, the company budgeted 4-5 weeks to complete the project and finished in approximately four-and-a-half weeks.

The biggest challenge with this type of project is communication and coordination. In general, the process went smoothly because the homeowners were informed of the project and its schedule, allowing Rio Grande to move forward with few interruptions.

Because the landscaping in the community was already well established, all of the materials had to be

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On this page are various views of the Burton Hills installation.
(Rio Grande Fence photos)

Above, members of Rio Grande Fence Company take a photo break. Above right, the entrance to Burton Hills. Located in southwest Nashville, the Burton Hills communities consist of 460 homes, condominiums, and business properties.

hand-carried to the fence line and concrete had to be mixed at the site, but this allowed the crews to stay mobile and get to the work areas without damaging the property.

About Rio Grande Fence

Rio Grande Fence Company was established in 1958 and is a third generation, family-owned business. Rio Grande's service area encompasses the mid-South region.

The company primarily serves the commercial and industrial market, and its clients include the Nashville International Airport, Tennessee National Guard Armory, and several sports facilities throughout the region.

Rio Grande prides itself in being well managed and maintaining a solid reputation. The company has stayed in business through several recessions and adapted to changes not just in the fencing industry but building in general.

Chris Bryson says this about Rio Grande: "Whether it's 10′ or 10,000′, we pride ourselves in doing it the right way the first time, every time."

For more information on Rio Grande, call 615-244-4766 or visit *www.rgfence.com*.

About Trex Fencing

Trex Seclusions composite fencing is the fence system from the nation's leading outdoor building materials manufacturer. The Seclusions product is a stick-built system similar in concept to wood and vinyl privacy fencing, but with distinct interlocking pickets, a cap-and-trim design, and one of the highest wind load ratings in the industry.

It is becoming increasingly popular not just in residential applications but also for community associations, commercial, and government projects where privacy, durability, and low-maintenance are required.

For more information on Trex fencing, call 877-700-8739 or visit the web site *www.YourNextFence.com.*

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