January/February 2026

ICF BUILDER

The Insulating Concrete Forms Magazine

World of Concrete Preview

Rebuilding Stronger With ICFs

How To: Be an Innovator

Project Profiles

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Inside This Issue

Features

On the Cover: The Alexander Condominium is the second phase of a community development, which showcases innovative ICF construction that enabled year-round building in Northern Ontario's harsh climate. Photo courtesy of Alleguard by Amvic.

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Undeniable Momentum

Welcome to the first issue of 2026! As we prepare for World of Concrete and the 21st annual ICF Builder Awards ceremony on January 21 at the Las Vegas Convention Center, I'm thinking about the reasons that we keep publishing this magazine and putting on these awards shows: It's about trying to build a safer, more resilient future. It's why we all do this. Trevor Brown's firsthand account of the Team Palisades Building Product Fair reveals how people who experienced the tragedy of the Palisades fires in California are seeking new ways to rebuild. As Trevor notes, "Stop building houses that catch on fire!" The stories in these pages showcase how ICFs answer that call. Tom Patton challenges us to embrace the "What if?" mindset championed by American Institute of Architects head Evelyn Lee, encouraging professionals to ditch the "bandage fixes" of traditional construction and become true innovators. His message is that those who embrace ICF technology are leading the change away from "the norm" that people seem to be so attached to. For anyone ready to take that step, Dave Gowers reminds us that World of Concrete remains the premier destination for ICF education and resources. Having attended since 2004, Dave's experience underscores how this annual gathering connects builders, engineers, and manufacturers in ways that accelerate adoption and innovation. Stop by booth N1769 to meet the team of *ICF Builder* magazine and get an invitation to the ICF Builder Awards program, if you don't have one already. This issue's project profiles demonstrate what's possible when innovative builders use innovative materials like ICFs. We walk you through the Bertelson Residence's blend of 1920s Craftsman aesthetics with cutting-edge geothermal and solar technology, to the Bluffside Party Pad's creative solution for adding a garage with a flat surface to steep terrain, to the Alexander Condominium's year-round construction in Northern Ontario's harsh climate. These projects prove that ICFs deliver on resilience, energy efficiency, design flexibility, and economic value. Building codes are tightening. Climate risks are intensifying. Insurance companies are rewarding resilient construction. Clients demand sustainability. ICFs meet and exceed these challenges. We have the technology, the knowledge, and the products to build better. Thank you for being part of this movement. Here's to a year of innovation, collaboration, and structures that stand strong against whatever comes their way. ■

Vanessa

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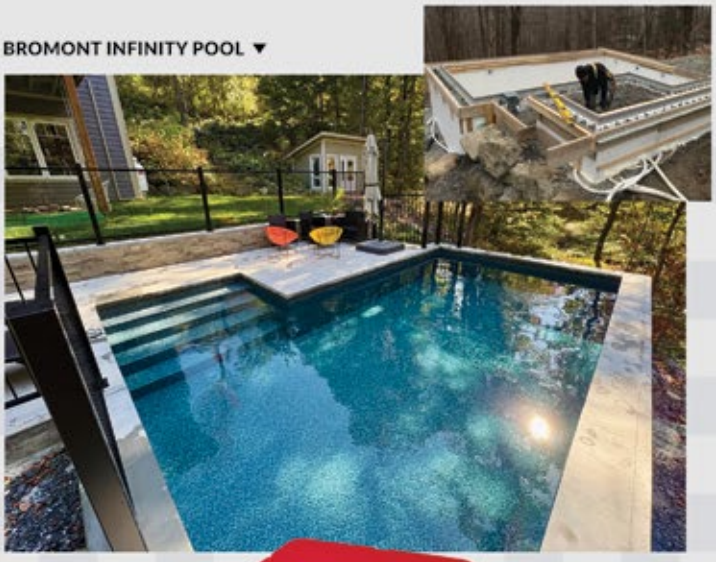

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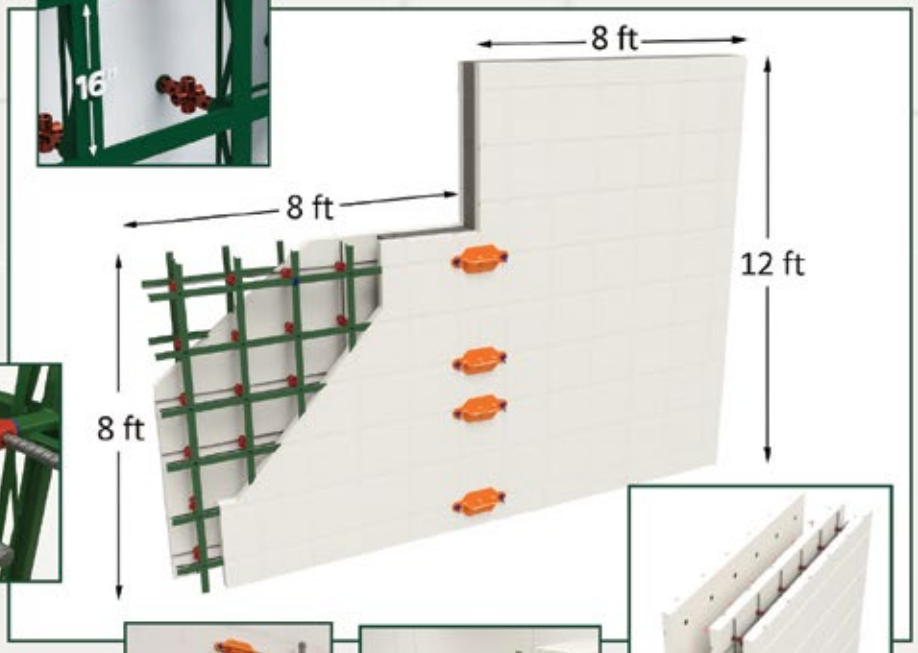

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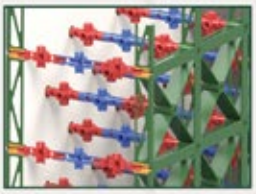

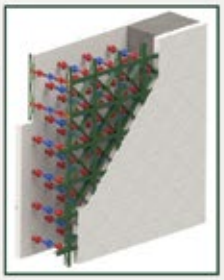

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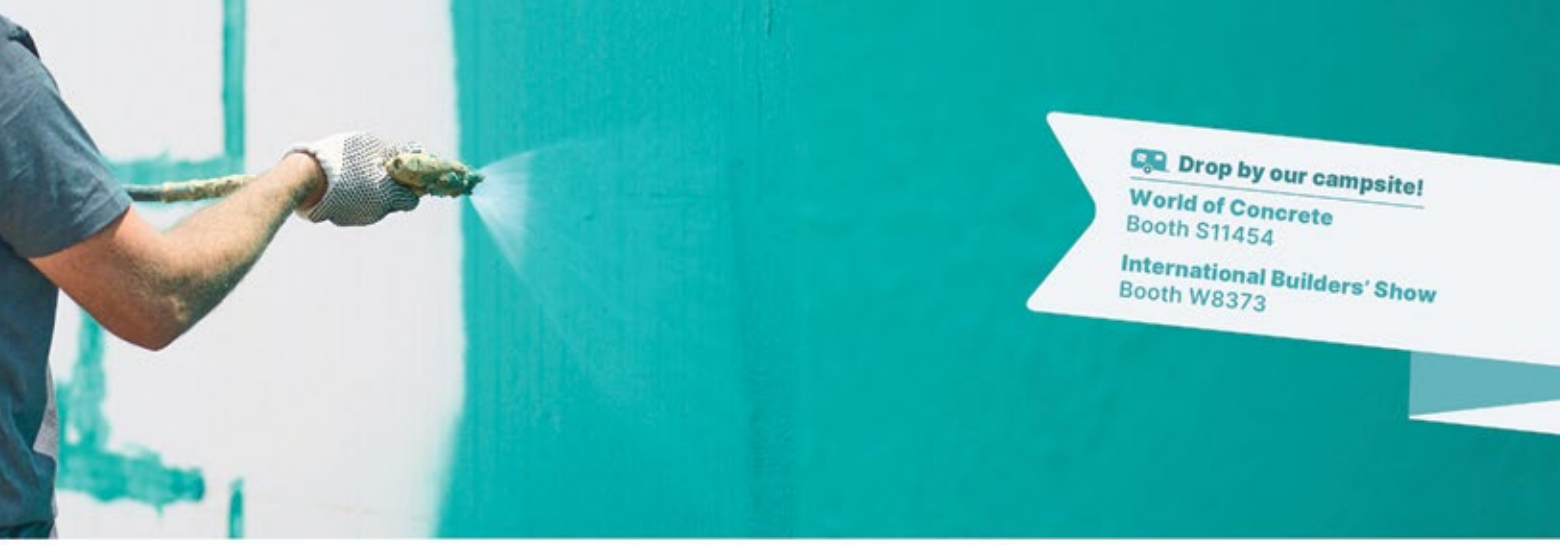

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ICF Builder Awards

This year marks the 21st annual ICF Builder Awards, which is the premier event for recognizing ICF construction. As in years past, the event ceremony will be held on Wednesday, January 21, 2026, at World of Concrete. Returning this year are the popular People's Choice Awards. Awards will be given for the winning projects in the following categories:

- **Small Residential:** 3,000 square feet or less
- **Large Residential:** 3,001 to 6,000 square feet
- **Unlimited Residential:** Over 6,000 square feet
- **MultiFamily:** Duplexes, apartments, hotels
- **MultiFamily Low-Rise:** Under 5 stories
- **Light Commercial:** Less than $5 million
- **Heavy Commercial:** $5 million or more
- **Education:** K-12 educational buildings
- **Pools:** Residential or commercial ICF pools
- **Specialty Applications:** Any other use of ICFs

A record number of people voted for their favorite People's Choice Awards projects in all of these categories last year. For more information regarding the ICF Builder and People's Choice Awards, visit *www.icfmag.com/builder-awards*. To RSVP to attend the awards ceremony on January 21, 2026, at World of Concrete, go to *www.icfmag.com/builder-award-rsvp*. Doors open at 5 pm. The event will be held in room N256 of the North Hall. ■

World of Concrete Preview

World of Concrete is the best place to connect with manufacturers of ICF systems and accessory products, as well as get continuing education credits, achieve a certification, or attend an informative session to learn something new about concrete. Visit the ICF Builder magazine staff at booth N1769, for industry information and invitations to the 2026 ICF Builder Awards, and to subscribe to the magazine or join the ICF Builder Group. The bolded exhibitor listings at right are advertisers in this issue of the magazine. ■

World of Concrete
Exhibits: January 20-22
Education: January 19-22
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www.worldofconcrete.com

ICF-Related Companies at World of Concrete 2026

Company	Booth #
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BuildBlock Building Systems	**N911**
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Fox Blocks ICF	**C4040**
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IntegraSpec ICF	**N262**
LiteForm	N1949
Mar-flex Waterproofing	S12127
Max USA Corp.	**C4005, O31137**
Mono Slab EZ Form	C6759
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Oztec Industries	**N2527**
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By Dave Gowers

Since graduating in 1969 from the University of London, with very little exception, I've been working with concrete in some capacity throughout my career. In my early career, which was contractor-based, I worked on bridge projects, culvert projects, water and sewage treatment projects, and mid- and high-rise concrete-framed projects.

Then, in January 1980, I arrived in Kuwait and worked for 18 months overseeing the construction of a turnkey, mid-rise, concrete-frame commercial building. My primary function there was to monitor quality control and to review all concrete element calculations. Following that, I spent time on a colossal water treatment plant 26 miles north of Baghdad, Iraq. My responsibilities on that project were to oversee and monitor both the design and the installation of concrete forming and shoring systems.

I really enjoyed working with concrete, so when I moved to the USA in 1986, I continued with my formwork and shoring pursuits, and ultimately formed Dave Gowers Engineering LLC in 1990. Being based in Southern California at that time, I was able to focus on forming and shoring assignments throughout California, Nevada, and Arizona. It was only after moving to Oregon in 1999 that I became interested in residential and commercial buildings.

Initially, I took on engineering assignments, which were mostly wood-frame construction. Having come from a European background, I was astonished when I first arrived in the U.S. to see so much wood-frame construction in both residential and commercial construction. In Europe and the U.K., buildings were at that time predominantly constructed with brick, masonry, or concrete. Wood-frame construction was, and still is, the predominant building system in the western United States, and especially so in California. Yet it has been proven over and over again to be an inappropriate building method, which has been tested to its limits and beyond as a result of every major earthquake.

I highly recommend World of Concrete as an ICF source of information. WOC is a great place to see the products first-hand, and to talk to knowledgeable staff at the booths.

Wood framing has many defects, many of which appear over and over again, such as splintered wood members and failed fastening and connector systems. Clearly, these structures, albeit designed to current code, had failed miserably in their performance to resist seismic forces.

Although I became proficient at structural engineering of wood-frame projects, I was certain there had to be a more robust building method that would be superior to woodframe construction. It was sometime around 2003 that I encountered ICF construction for the first time, and I was immediately hooked, as the saying goes. Not only did this construction method utilize concrete as its primary strength element, producing shear resistance close to 10 times that of single-shear wood-framing, but it simultaneously provided an incredible increase in the R-value of a wall assembly. At that time, the code requirement was R-13 for walls, and the calculated value for an ICF wall was typically around R-23. Taking into account the tremendous advantage of the concrete thermal mass, the performance R-value of a 6-inch core ICF wall was actually closer to R-50!

I attended World of Concrete in 2004, and have attended most shows since then. The expo takes place in Las Vegas, so for West Coast-based builders, it's within easy reach. Back at the 2004 expo, I visited every ICF exhibitor that was on-site that year. There were around 10 booths of different manufacturers. I was well received by all. In talking with the exhibitors, it became evident that there were very few ICF experienced engineers available, so finding an engineering referral was challenging. I left several business cards at each booth, and within a very short period of time, started receiving ICF engineering enquiries.

I highly recommend World of Concrete as an ICF source of information. While the number and names of the exhibitors have changed over the years, for those that are currently in the marketplace, WOC is a great place to see the products first-hand, and to talk to knowledgeable staff at the booths. You can discuss different structures that ICF can be used for, find out where products can be obtained from, and many other items of information essential to know about prior

to embarking upon an ICF project.

In addition to checking out ICF systems themselves, WOC offers a showcase for ICF wall bracing systems, ICF accessories, ICF coatings, and synthetic rebar. For the past several years, Plumwall ICF Bracing Systems has had a booth at WOC. They are very informative, and in the past have offered a free shipping deal if you place your order at WOC. It's been great to get to know the guys at Plumwall and to catch up with Chad Hiller, their national sales manager, each year.

For ICF accessories, you need to visit the Clearco booth and talk with Mark and Jared Symington. They offer a variety of ICF accessory items, including my favorite, the Burmon wood ledger bracket. They offer a range of Burmon products, including the extremely innovative buck brace, which eliminates horizontal buck bracing and allows unimpeded walkthrough at door openings. Clearco also offers a primer-less, peel-and-stick waterproof membrane, one that actually sticks on wet foam.

There are many exhibits at WOC offering coatings, some of which can be applied directly to the expanded polystyrene (EPS) of ICF. These coatings vary from elastomeric stuccos to those that can be applied to swimming pools. With more people considering ICF construction for their swimming pools, the waterproof coatings are highly sought after.

And finally, synthetic rebar is well represented at WOC. Two major brands that I am familiar with are Gator Bar and MST. Both have had their respective products evaluated by evaluation agencies, and have those results documented. With fiberglass rebar having twice the tensile strength and a quarter of the weight of steel rebar, there are some distinct advantages to using fiberglass rebar in ICF walls.

In conclusion, if you are contemplating an ICF project, a trip to WOC is very worthwhile. You'll have hands-on contact with most, if not all, of the products you'll need to familiarize yourself with. Being an informed client will save you both time and money as you plan your ICF project. World of Concrete occurs every year in Las Vegas at the Las Vegas Convention Center. For 2026, the expo dates are January 20-22, that's Tuesday through Friday.

After graduating from the UK's London University in 1969, Dave Gowers acquired extensive experience in concrete construction through a diversity of commercial, residential, and industrial projects, up to $1 billion in value, and in several countries. He is well-versed in concrete formwork and shoring systems, and over the past 20 years has produced structural design solutions for over 200 ICF projects, both residential and commercial. Dave resides in Southern Oregon with his wife and business partner, Jennifer. Dave holds a PE license in 15 states/territories, is the principal of Dave Gowers Engineering LLC, and is the co-principal of Cascade ICF LLC. His website is www.dgengineering.com, and he may be reached at 541-660-9661 or dave@dgengineering.com.

How To

Be an Innovator in Design and Construction with ICFs

By Tom Patton

There is a significant movement within the design and construction industry, led by Evelyn Lee, the head of the American Institute of Architects (AIA). She encourages professionals to adopt a "what if" mindset, which involves questioning existing practices and considering new possibilities for the industry. This question challenges assumptions, pushes teams to rethink materials and methods, and encourages collaboration toward sustainability. It asks designers, developers, and builders to be "disruptors" who think outside the box and challenge industry norms to foster innovation.

Lead the Change – Innovate with ICFs

Construction is evolving fast. Codes are tighter, clients demand energy efficiency, resiliency, comfort, as materials and labor for traditional construction are in short supply. Professionals who stick to "the way it's always been done" risk falling behind. Those who embrace innovation set themselves apart.

Enter Insulated Concrete Forms (ICFs), a proven system for more than 60 years, that bridges design vision and construction reality allowing architects and contractors to deliver buildings that over-perform and last the test of time. ICFs answer that "what if" question. They give both designers and contractors a tool to rethink walls entirely, moving beyond incremental tweaks to traditional framing or concrete block and toward an integrated, high-performance solution.

ICF wall assemblies are recognized for setting new standards in construction efficiency, building science, resiliency, and sustainability. They stand out compared to traditional walls, "the norm" of construction methods such as wood framing and concrete block, or regular poured concrete.

Ditch the "Bandage" Fixes

When examining traditional practices, wood framing and concrete block construction are often considered "the norm" for building wall envelopes. These methods have undergone changes over the years. For example, a traditional wood stud has evolved from old growth, true 2-inch by 4-inch (or more) piece of lumber to be roughly 1.5 inches by 3.5 inches, sourced from new-growth trees.

Concrete block has changed less, relying on additional layers to keep pace with performance requirements. Wood framing has advanced to nominal 2-inch by 6-inch studs with multiple layers to meet modern codes — more studs, double framing, increased insulation, moisture barriers, membranes, and sealants. These aren't innovations but "bandages" that add material and labor while tinkering with "the norm." ICFs replace all that complexity by simplifying the wall design and improving the efficiency of construction by reducing materials and labor to achieve a high-performance building envelope.

Adapting to Changing Codes and Expectations

ICFs are not a gamble. The ICC Evaluation Services, in collaboration with major ICF manufacturers, has established Acceptance Criteria AC353 for Flat Wall ICFs. This standard requires all ICF products to undergo specific third-party testing, such as manufacturing quality control, fire safety, health impacts, resiliency, structural performance, and code compliance. All ICF products must publish their Code Compliance Research Reports to demonstrate compliance with relevant codes. Design professionals, contractors, and clients can be confident that the performance of the system is backed by tested data, not guesswork.

As building and energy codes in both the U.S. and Canada become more stringent with each update, increasing the focus on thermal efficiency, air tightness, resiliency, and sustainability, more evaluations are required in the design phase and construction. In most areas, homes and commercial buildings are now subject to pre-design analysis and energy modelling. Commercial projects often involve a new review of the design and construction methodology by Building Envelope Consultants.

For contractors and designers, being an innovator using ICFs means easier design decisions on wall assemblies, fewer headaches from on-site surprise inspections, and fewer wall assembly deficiencies. For clients, it means a building that performs from day one and continues at that level for decades.

Education to Embrace Innovation

A key aspect of being an "innovator" using ICFs is educating yourself. Research and evaluate which ICF product is best for you. Understand the installation requirements, the relationship and support from the manufacturer and/or supplier, the building science aspects, and how to be able to explain all the benefits of ICFs to clients versus building to "the norm." Market yourself as a step above the regular designer or contractor, re-establish yourself as an innovator or disruptor that is designing or building with a better system, focused on the future and sustainability.

The client must also be educated to recognize these benefits of life-cycle cost savings, enhanced resiliency, and the value of building sustainably for the future. By choosing and promoting ICFs, designers and builders position themselves as innovators and disruptors versus sticking to the old ways.

Architects are encouraged to design by anticipating future needs, critically analyzing existing norms, and adopting philosophies that drive them to think creatively and boldly, echoing Evelyn Lee's assertion that the aim is to create a field that is more thoughtful, adaptive, and ultimately more human. Similarly, ICF contractors contribute to this vision by using this innovative product that is straightforward to build with and sell to the client, due to its clear advantages in building for the future.

Responding to Market Challenges

In the current market, material and labor shortages significantly influence the planning and execution of design and construction projects. These shortages, along with considerations of timing and costs, play a major role in both residential and commercial building. Fortunately, ICF blocks stand out because manufacturers produce and maintain a strong nationwide stock, plus the essential components for the wall assembly — concrete and rebar — are readily available. Projects stay on schedule, which expedites occupancy timelines, budgets remain predictable, and the risk of delay diminishes. This reliability allows contractors and designers to focus on execution and quality rather than scrambling for materials or juggling trades.

Transitioning to a new system can be daunting — but ICF manufacturers make it straightforward. Architects benefit from AIA-certified training programs, explaining the products, design principles, building techniques, and performance benefits. Additionally, certified installer training programs are available, both online and/or in person, with hands-on programs. Contractors become proficient in ICF construction for all types of projects. To truly become an innovator or disruptor, it is essential to educate oneself on product details and design criteria. With proper training, teams can deliver high-performance walls confidently and efficiently, regardless of the project type.

Support and Compliance for Innovation

ICF manufacturers provide resources like technical libraries, CAD/BIM details, estimating programs, case studies to bridge the gap between design and construction, and technical support networks. Energy consultants may provide modelling comparisons that highlight the energy benefits of building high-performance ICF wall assemblies versus the norms. This will demonstrate the potential life-cycle operational cost savings with ICFs for both residential and commercial buildings. Case studies, energy evaluation reports, and utility records prove the operational cost savings from building of all types of residential, commercial, institutional, etc., with ICF building envelopes.

Future Proofing Your Practice

Stepping out of "the norm" in your business philosophy or the way you build requires a "what if" analysis. How can you develop a client attraction system that will enhance your sales and meet clients' demands for sustainability, resiliency, safety, and comfort? A strategic path will be in learning to promote one high-performance product, ICFs, that addresses all these modern expectations. Follow the movement to become and promote yourself as a "disruptor" by being an "innovator." Contractors and designers who embrace innovation position themselves as market leaders. Those who stick to the old ways risk being left behind. The ICF industry is supporting you — design smarter, build stronger, build for the future.

Tom Patton had a 30-year architectural design background prior to joining the ICF industry in 2001 with the technical support department at ARXX. Over the last 20 years, Tom has worked with major ICF companies developing technical documentation, application details, and training programs, as well as consulting and promoting ICFs with various associations, including the ICFMA, NRMCA, and codes and standards committees. Currently, Tom is Corporate Brand Ambassador for Fox Blocks and co-developer of the Fox Blocks Integrated Learning Center. ■

Rebuilding Stronger: Lessons from the Palisades Fire Recovery Event

By Trevor Brown

When wildfires swept through Southern California's Palisades region in January 2025, nearly 7,000 structures were reduced to ash. Families lost not just homes but decades of memories. Amid the devastation, a powerful movement emerged — one focused on resilience, collaboration, and rethinking how we build.

A couple of months ago, Jacob Schnibbe, California Territory Manager for SuperForm ICF, and I joined hundreds of residents, contractors, and design professionals at the Pacific Design Center in West Hollywood for the Team Palisades Building Product Fair — a first-of-its-kind event uniting more than 30 vendors committed to fire-resistant construction.

What began as a small idea — "a cocktail-hour conversation about building better" — evolved into a large-scale exhibition showcasing products and partnerships designed to ensure history doesn't repeat itself.

From Tragedy to Teamwork

Organizer Dennis Smith envisioned a community event that would do more than hand out brochures. He wanted survivors to see, touch, and compare real materials capable of standing up to fire. Within weeks, the concept grew from a modest round-table to a comprehensive trade show drawing hundreds of attendees and a full slate of fire-resilient brands.

We thought we'd be sitting in a conference room talking with a few people; instead, we were part of an incredible movement — 32 vendors all united around one goal: rebuilding smarter.

The event's energy was unmistakable. Manufacturers, installers, architects, and homeowners mingled as equals, trading lessons learned and exploring ways to collaborate. The shared sentiment was that: competition takes a back seat when the mission is saving lives and property.

A Broader Cross-Section of Loss

Media coverage of the Palisades fires often focused on multimillion-dollar estates perched above the Pacific Ocean. But at the trade show, a different story emerged.

We spoke with families who lost modest 1,200-square-foot homes that had been in their families for generations. Most of the lost homes weren't luxury properties — they were everyday homes filled with history.

That diversity of experience underscored a sobering truth: wildfire doesn't discriminate by ZIP code or square footage. Every homeowner — from Malibu mansions to inland neighborhoods — needs access to resilient design solutions that don't break the bank.

ICF and the Power of Resilience

Jacob Schnibbe was on hand, helping me spread the word and to educate attendees about the benefits of Insulated Concrete Forms. "We went down expecting to showcase resilient products," Schnibbe says. "But what stood out most was the resilience of the people — homeowners determined to rebuild stronger and safer."

SuperForm's participation, alongside Innovative Drafting and Design, signaled a growing commitment to expanding ICF construction across California. As Schnibbe notes, the Golden State's combination of seismic risk, wildfires, and rising energy costs makes it an ideal market for next-generation building methods.

A Coalition of Fire-Resistant Brands

The trade show was a showcase of synergy. Vendors weren't just pitching products; they were forming alliances. Among the standouts were Vulcan Vents, whose self-closing, fire-rated vents prevent embers from entering attics or crawl spaces — a critical weak point in many homes. eStucco, a fire-resistant exterior finish, is gaining national attention for both aesthetics and performance. Hulk Systems offers waterproofing and fire-rated coatings that seal gaps and soffits, complementing ICF walls for full-envelope protection.

"It felt like a team effort," Schnibbe notes. "ICF walls, eStucco exteriors, Vulcan Vents, and Hulk Coatings — together they form a complete defensive system. No single product is the hero; the combination is."

That cooperative spirit extended across traditionally competing manufacturers. Even representatives from ICCF (Insulated Composite Concrete Forms) companies joined the discussion, emphasizing shared advocacy for non-combustible construction.

Design Collaboration: Starting Fire Safety on the Drawing Board

One of the most impactful realizations came from the Innovative Drafting & Design booth, where I represented the firm in the absence of owner Heather Herring-Brown. As homeowners explored reconstruction options, many discovered that fire-resilient building starts with fire-resilient design. By integrating fire-safe materials — like

eStucco finishes or Vulcan Vents — directly into the plans, we eliminate surprises during construction.

Architects and engineers echoed that sentiment, emphasizing early-stage collaboration. Encouragingly, many California jurisdictions are now accepting draftsman-drawn plans accompanied by structural engineering, streamlining approvals and reducing design costs for fire victims.

"It's about speeding up recovery," Heather Hering-Brown stated. "Families can't wait months for permits. When we pair draftsmen with structural engineers or architects, we maintain safety and save time."

Affordability and the Rebuild Reality

Insurance payouts rarely match true reconstruction costs. Many attendees confessed they'd need to stretch every dollar.

That's where ICF's long-term savings — lower energy bills, reduced maintenance, and disaster mitigation incentives — become crucial.

Contractor JJ Penna of Penna Construction, a third-generation ICF builder, offered practical context: In Southern California, ICF homes cost roughly 2% to 5% more upfront than stick-built equivalents, yet deliver substantial lifecycle savings through energy efficiency, insurance reductions, and durability.

"You can offset that margin by downsizing HVAC systems or shortening build schedules," Schnibbe notes. "Speed, strength, and sustainability pay dividends."

More Than Fire Protection

While fire was the headline issue, resilience extends further. ICF structures excel in seismic zones, hurricane regions, and extreme climates alike. ICFs are up to 10 times stronger than wood framing, eliminating costly hardware like Simpson hangers and shear ties — savings that can reach six figures on large projects. Continuous insulation cuts heating and cooling loads, which increases energy efficiency. This is vital in states that are pushing aggressive energy-use reductions. Thicker walls mean quieter interiors and fewer maintenance cycles.

"We're solving multiple problems with one solution," Penna emphasizes. "Fire, wind, earthquake, and energy — ICF checks every box."

Shifting the National Mindset

For decades, North America's default has been wood framing — "building houses out of firewood," as I like to bluntly put it. Yet each wildfire season proves the limits of that tradition.

Across Europe and Asia, concrete and masonry dominate residential construction, resulting in structures that stand for centuries. The U.S. is slowly catching up, driven by escalating climate risks and a new generation of builders championing change.

Statistics reinforce the urgency: By mid-year, the U.S. had already recorded 44,000 wildfires. As Penna warns, "They're not slowing down."

Education is the next frontier —

reaching policymakers, insurers, and homeowners with data on resilient design's ROI. Events like Team Palisades are turning points, transforming awareness into action.

Emerging Innovations: MST Rebar and Beyond

Among the technical conversations at the show was MST Structural GFRP Rebar — a non-corrosive, fire-resistant fiberglass reinforcement poised to revolutionize concrete construction. MST's upcoming seismic-zone testing could soon extend approvals into California's seismic zone D, unlocking widespread adoption. Combined with its heat tolerance, light weight, and superior tensile strength, MST represents the next evolution of sustainable reinforcement.

Paired with Hulk's waterproofing systems, which now carry fire-rating approvals, and integrated design from Innovative Drafting & Design, builders can deliver 360-degree resilience — from foundation to rooftop vent.

Beyond the Burn: A Blueprint for the Future

The emotional weight of the Palisades event was undeniable. Many attendees arrived grieving; most left empowered. People weren't looking for sympathy. They wanted solutions — real, tangible paths to rebuild safer. For Schnibbe, the experience underscored the importance of regional collaboration. Covering seven Western states, he sees parallels everywhere: communities confronting wildfire, drought, and seismic risk all at once. The takeaway is universal: Resilient building isn't optional — it's essential.

How to Get Involved

Homeowners, builders, and suppliers can join the movement by connecting with *TeamPalisades.org*, exploring ICF solutions, and consulting with specialists like Innovative Drafting & Design for fire-resilient plans. Supporting brands such as Vulcan Vents, eStucco, Hulk Systems, and MST Structural Rebar ensures every layer of the building envelope contributes to safety and sustainability.

A Call to Build Better

As smoke clears and rebuilding begins, one message echoes from the Pacific Design Center to construction sites nationwide: Stop building houses that catch on fire!

By embracing materials that don't burn, rot, or collapse under stress, the industry can turn tragedy into transformation. The Palisades event proved what's possible when manufacturers, designers, and homeowners align around the common goal of creating homes that stand strong for generations.

The blueprint is here. Now it's up to all of us to build it with ICF!

Trevor Brown is the owner and operator of Innovative Building Products, a multiline ICF and ICF accessories distribution company. He has been in the ICF industry for over 20 years, starting as an installer and distributor. He has managed the Western U.S. for an industry-leading ICF company and is now an independent consultant for ICF builders and homeowners across the country. He is also the co-host of the Build With ICF Podcast, which can be found on the website www.buildwithicf.com. ■

The Alexander Condominium

The Alexander Condominium was the 1st Runner Up and the winner of the People's Choice Award in the MultiFamily category in the 2025 ICF Builder Awards. The project provides 39 units in a 4.5-story residential building in Huntsville, Ontario, built using Amvic ICFs made by Alleguard. As the second phase of the Campus Trails wellness community, this $13.9 million project showcases innovative ICF construction that enabled year-round building in Northern Ontario's harsh climate.

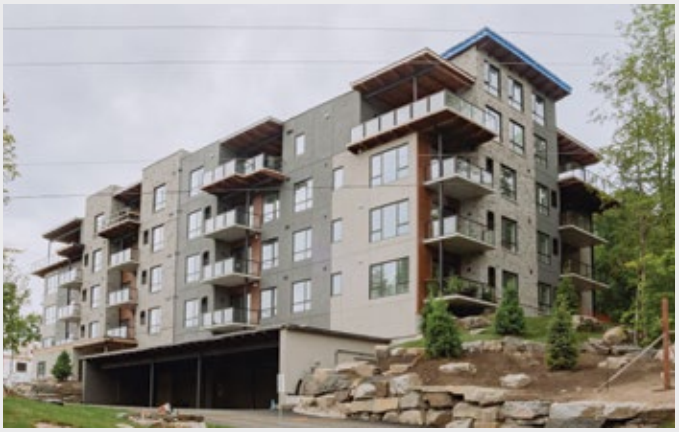
With a total area of 50,355 square feet of finished space plus a 13,369-square-foot parking garage, the total ICF usage was 45,045 square feet. Out of a construction time of 92 weeks (644 days), only 170 days were taken up by ICF installation. The project was completed on time and on budget, and the builders estimate they saved two months when compared to conventional framing.

Design and Architecture

The Alexander's design draws inspiration from its natural Muskoka surroundings, incorporating timber details and mixed-medium siding that blend seamlessly with the forested landscape. "The building height was strategically designed to nestle below the tree canopy, preserving natural sightlines from nearby lakes," explained Jon Morton, the project manager, contractor, and developer with Greystone Project Management Inc. "Interior spaces feature 9-foot finished ceilings and layouts optimized for resident privacy while maximizing both interior and exterior living areas."

Greystone's team has been building with ICF since 1998. ICF construction proved essential for this project, enabling continuous winter construction despite subzero temperatures—saving approximately two months compared to conventional framing methods. The 12-foot-high parking garage walls utilized 10-inch ICF blocks with heavy reinforcing to address significant grade differentials on site. The building height was precisely designed to match the ICF block coursing dimensions, minimizing material waste and cuts.

Photos courtesy of Amvic by Alleguard



Sustainability and Impact

Energy efficiency is a standout feature, with average monthly energy costs of just $28.32 per suite for the entire building, including common areas, noted Morton. Timber overhangs reduce incoming sunlight during summer to reduce cooling costs, and allow incoming sunlight in winter months to promote passive heating and minimize heating costs. LED lighting is used throughout the project. Building height and coursing are aligned to minimize

Project Statistics

Location: Huntsville, Ontario

Type: MultiFamily building

Size: 50,355 sq. ft.

ICF Use: 45,045 sq. ft.

Cost: $13.9 million

Total Construction: 92 weeks

ICF Installation Time: 170 days

Fast Facts

- 39-unit residential building with underground parking and amenity room
- The Alexander was the first building of three on the same site
- ICF allowed for winter construction in Northern Ontario — concrete was poured in sub-zero temperatures
- This is the second building in a wellness community

Visit *www.icfmag.com/project-profiles* for more photos of this project.

cut-offs and waste generation on site. "Taking advantage of ICF and concrete in the design allowed for the use of the material for fire separations, while providing maximum enjoyment for owners through reduced sound transfer between units," said Morton.

The Alexander is the second of 12 similar and larger buildings within the development, and the success of the first phase was extremely important, which is why ICF was selected as the primary building element, said Morton. The larger Campus Trails development is a unique wellness community integrated with healthcare facilities, including Campus Trails Wellness Centre, which houses multiple medical practices and pharmacies. The project has received extensive media coverage and generated a waitlist for future phases. ■

Bertelson Residence

The Bertelson Residence in Winterset, Iowa, is a single-family residence with 5,168 square feet of finished space built using Fox Blocks ICF. This home was the 2nd Runner Up and People's Choice Award winner in the Large Residential category of the 2025 ICF Builder Awards. The homeowners' goal was to build an ICF home in a historic neighborhood, featuring authentic details from the Craftsman era of architecture. The project entailed the demolition of an existing late 1800s two-story brick outbuilding, as well as the removal of large onsite trees and the preservation of large oaks on the property.

"The team adopted a 1920s Craftsman-style design to fit into the existing neighborhood while incorporating modern technology, including heated floors, geothermal heating and cooling, ICF walls, solar panels, open tail trusses, rainwater collection system, and a safe room under the wraparound front porch," said Mike Kennaw, a representative of form manufacturer Fox Blocks by Airlite Plastics Co. The home also includes 60 yards of stamped and stained concrete, a heated driveway and carport slabs, as well as concrete porch decks.

Photos courtesy of Fox Blocks by Airlite Plastics

Complexity and Creativity

The L-shape design of the 5,168-square-foot finished home with nearly 3,730 square feet of unfinished space called for 44 corners for the basement and main level, with beams to carry the partial upper level. The team engineered a special steel tube mounted to ICF walls to carry the eyebrow roof load between the main and upper-level floors. An elevated second-story concrete porch cantilevers above the concrete first-story wrap-around porch. The project also incorporates geothermal energy with 18 on-site wells. Custom quarter-sawn oak trim work and stairs, and quarter-sawn oak floors with Brazilian inlays elevate the design.

The floor plans posed a creative challenge for the project team. "The home includes an elevated second-story concrete porch that cantilevers above a concrete first-story wrap-around porch," said Kennaw. "Additionally, the space below the first-story porch is a saferoom, accessible from the basement." All exterior walls of the home are built with ICF construction, and 400 square feet of LiteDeck was used in the construction of the porches. The team had to think outside the box to engineer the rafters to support the

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Project Statistics

Location: Winterset, Iowa

Type: Residence

Size: 5,168 sq. ft.

ICF Use: 13,976 sq. ft.

Cost: $3 million

Total Construction: 160 weeks

ICF Installation Time: 60 days

Fast Facts

- The project entailed the demolition of an existing late-1800s two-story brick outbuilding, as well as the removal of large onsite trees and the preservation of large oaks on the property.
- The team adopted a 1920s Craftsman-style design to fit into the existing neighborhood while incorporating modern technology, including heated floors, geothermal heating and cooling, ICF walls, solar panels, open tail trusses, rainwater collection system, and a safe room under the wraparound front porch.
- In order to make space for the project on the existing site, the team acquired a variance.
- L-shape design with 44 corners for the basement and main level, with beams to carry the partial upper level.
- The team engineered a special steel tube mounted to ICF walls to carry the eyebrow roof load between the main and upper-level floors.
- Custom quarter-sawn oak trim work and stairs and quarter-sawn oak floors with Brazilian inlays elevate the design.

Visit *www.icfmag.com/project-profiles* for more photos of this project.

second-story concrete porch and the 4-inch-wide eaves over the porches, both of which tie into the ICF system.

The project occupies the majority of the lot it was built on. In order to make space for the project on the existing site, the team acquired a variance. Existing mature trees on the property caused an additional challenge, as it was important that the trees be preserved. Other challenges included retrofitting reclaimed materials and incorporating contemporary details and systems into the building without compromising the structure's historic Craftsman style, explained Kennaw.

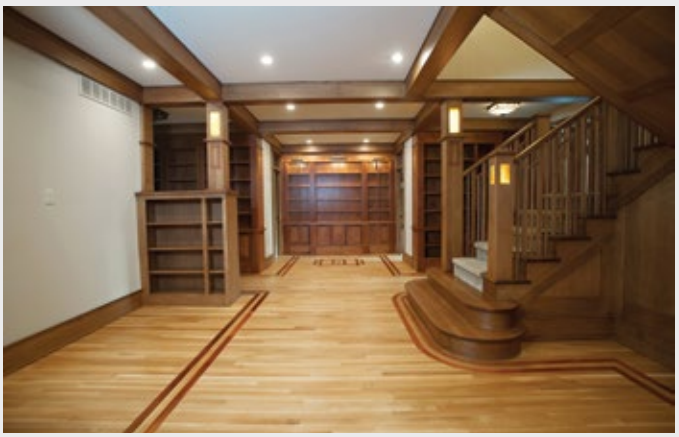
"Some items from the Victorian-era home that previously occupied the lot were reclaimed for use in the new construction," said Kennaw. "This included a stained-glass window above the entry, original bricks on the exterior facade, and re-milled woodwork utilized for interior finishes."

Sustainability and Impact

The project incorporated 100% icynene spray foam, composed of recycled materials, in the roof. Ninety-six solar panels with battery storage and backup for the entire structure line the roof. With the wells, the monthly heating and cooling costs are under $100, which also includes the 25-by-75-foot wood shop and garage attached to the home. When possible, an HVAC economizer utilizes the cool outdoor air to cool the building instead of operating the air conditioning compressor. This reduces the strain on the cooling system.

The residence won an award at the IRMCA 2023 Concrete in Excellence banquet in the "Residential Above Grade" category. Kennaw says the homeowner was extremely pleased with the home's energy efficiency and quietness, especially since the property is located in town, close to school traffic. The home was selected as a winner for the Excellence in Concrete for Iowa 2023 program.

The general contractor, Newcastle Enterprises, has specialized in custom ICF homes and commercial buildings for more than 30 years. The homeowners viewed a few Newcastle homes and consulted with homeowners, which sparked their interest in ICF due to all the added benefits. ■



Bluffside Party Pad

The Bluffside Party Pad in White Salmon, Washington, is a garage project built using Amvic ICFs by Alleguard. The project was the 1st Runner UP and People's Choice Award winner in the Specialty Applications category in the 2025 ICF Builder Awards.

Josh Miller is the Owner of Highmark Design and Construction, which performed general contracting and ICF installation for the project. Highmark Design and Construction is a distributor for Alleguard in Washington and Northern Oregon. The project was completed over a period of 11 months, and only five days involved ICF installation. Miller estimates the team saved 8 days using ICF construction.

Complexity and Creativity

Highmark got involved after the customer approached wanting a garage on a steep hillside, while also wanting to be able to use its flat roof as an entertainment area. Living on a steep bluff and having a flat 'yard' space on the roof of your garage sounded unrealistic, but it was achievable.

"With the garage being constructed on a lot already having a $5 million house on it, and the owner wanting the project to 'flow' with the natural terrain, and having to remove 400 to 450 tons of dirt made the job quite challenging," Miller said. Also driving complexity were the physical requirements to make the project happen. The building needed to house an 11-foot-tall and 26-foot-long Sprinter van. "Wall heights with the 100 psf lateral pressure on a 13-plus-foot-tall wall were not easy," he said. "The roof needed to be designed to be a waterproof party pad capable of handling the 100 psf snow load, plus sand, rock, and pavers to make it a living space the owner could enjoy."

Construction was also mostly completed in the rainy season of the Pacific Northwest, so safety around any dig out was paramount, he said. The project's preliminary engineering phase faced several challenges, beginning with the silty clay soil composition that required walls capable of withstanding 100 psf lateral loads. While the initial design called for an 8- or 10-inch core ICF, reducing 2 inches from each wall meant increasing the building's overall depth to ensure the van would fit properly. Before excavation could begin, the team had to address two infrastructure issues: rerouting an existing pedestrian path that connected the service road to the

Photos courtesy of Amvic by Alleguard

client's residence and relocating a drain field line that ran directly through the proposed garage location. The government permitting process for these modifications proved more time-consuming than anticipated. Additionally, given the Pacific Northwest's seismic activity and engineering concerns about the structural capacity of the flat roof design, the construction required an extensive reinforcement solution — ultimately incorporating 12,000 pounds of rebar to ensure adequate strength and stability.

Craftsmanship and Impact

Waterproofing was a primary concern given that approximately 80% of the structure would be underground with living space above it. During heavy rainfall, the newly installed drainage system was measured handling 700 gallons per minute, channeling all runoff from the entire site through pipes to a small retention basin positioned at the property's lowest elevation. The roof waterproofing strategy resembled swimming pool construction more than conventional roofing, employing a multi-layered system of Hulk, Ames Bluemax, and Basecrete, topped with dimple mat and ultimately buried beneath sand and rock.

The lateral loading calculations demanded meticulous rebar placement in the rear and side walls, while the roof's structural requirements led to custom-ordering specially bent #9 rebar double-ended candy canes. To prevent water pooling, the roof was engineered with a three-directional slope and surrounded by drain tile within a perimeter curb, with strategically placed weep holes at low points to facilitate drainage, though the surface was expected to remain damp or wet roughly 80% of the year. The finishing touches required matching the stucco and aesthetic details of the outdoor entertaining area to seamlessly integrate with the existing residence.

"The customer requirements for blending with the natural settings were the most challenging aspect of the build," said Miller, and that required the crew to do a lot of landscaping, much more than anticipated! The team used cranes to move rocks around the building, as well as to drop an excavator onto the roof to help move

rocks. "We needed a way to have the party pad flow with the existing landscape, and tie into the house," he said. "We built another ICF retaining wall behind the structure, with a few stairs leading down to the pad."

Miller said this project made "a believer" out of a client who had never heard of ICF before Highmark introduced it to him. "The ICF made the structure the least stressful part of the project!" Miller said. "The owner is very happy and continues to call our company with other projects, mostly because he trusts us to get the job done. This was a big undertaking for both the client and ourselves; we will be showcasing this to clients for years to come." ■

Project Statistics

Location: White Salmon, Washington

Type: Garage

Size: 950 sq. ft.

ICF Use: ~3,500 sq. ft.

Cost: $550,000

Total Construction: 11 months

ICF Installation Time: 5 days

Fast Facts

- A garage storage structure on an extremely sloped property
- Sized to accommodate an 11-foot-tall by 26-foot-long Sprinter van
- "Party Pad" entertainment area on top of structure
- Structure blends with surrounding landscape and existing $5 million home

Visit *www.icfmag.com/project-profiles* for more photos of this project.

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