

Built like a brick-fit house

YOU'VE HEARD OF PRECAST concrete. But what about precast brick?

The Jefferson at Thomas Circle, a new D.C. apartment complex, is one of the city's first projects to use Smith-Midland's precast brick product, featuring concrete molded to look like brick with contrasting mortar colored by hand.

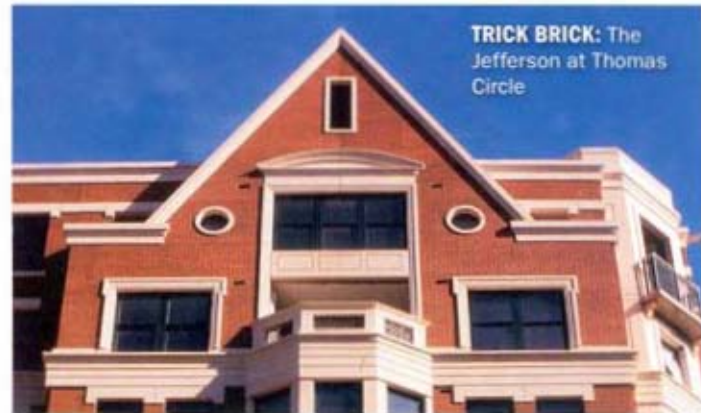
"It looks like a hand-laid brick wall but it's actually a precast concrete panel," says Ashley Smith, vice president of sales and marketing for the Midland, Va., company.

JPI, which developed the 10-story project at 1301 M St. NW,

awarded Smith-Midland a \$2.3 million contract to manufacture and install the panels. The project was completed this summer.

The faux brick product is part of Smith-Midland's Slenderwall line of precast concrete panels. While traditional panels are 6 inches wide because of the structural reinforcements within, the Slenderwall panels are only 2 inches wide. A galvanized steel frame is attached to the interior side, and insulation and drywall can be applied directly on the frame.

Smith-Midland bought a license to the method in the 1990s. It can feature many fin-



TRICK BRICK: The Jefferson at Thomas Circle

COURTESY

ishes, from brick to faux limestone and granite. To achieve the brick appearance, Smith-Midland pours the concrete into molds fashioned from real bricks. Workers apply an acid wash to enhance the texture and then color the mortar by

hand. The company has completed about 20 such projects, including several in the region.

The benefits? For the JPI project, it reduced construction time by about 45 days and hard and soft costs by 20 to 25 percent, Smith says.