



## Commons ground

### KBS replaces neighborhood gem

By Jennifer Pfaff

When Ken Kopps Fine Foods closed several years ago, it created a vacant space in a Madison neighborhood.

It also created an opportunity for a new development to bring new life to the area.

The city had a vision for the vacant corner spot. It wanted a pedestrian-friendly building to add a destination spot to the neighborhood west of Camp Randall Stadium. The city also wanted a useful, architecturally pleasing building for area residents.

The solution came in the form of Monroe Street Commons, a 52-unit, four-story condominium complex above a Trader Joe's grocery store.

"They provided a building that took aspects of the surrounding stores and incorporated them so this building would blend into the neighborhood," said Jeremy Cortesio, project manager with general contractor KBS Construction Inc.

To bring the building, which takes up nearly a full block, down to human scale, the massive structure is broken up into multiple facades by using different colors, creating the illusion that there are several buildings.

The first level interacts with the walking public and is made of brick and stone, and upper levels feature a cement stucco system, Cortesio said.

But putting it all together in a tight urban location was a challenge.

"We had to work with the space we had," Cortesio said. "You have to have more efficient delivery schedules. You need deliveries when you need materials, not several weeks before."

But even with tight scheduling, some of the streets had to be blocked off for concrete pours. And that didn't even take into account Madison's decision to upgrade utility mains and road surfaces around the site, eating up more available space.



Photos by Gene Braaksma

### PROJECT ESSENTIALS

**Project Name:** Monroe Street Commons

**Location:** Madison

**Submitting Company:** KBS Construction Inc., Madison

**General Contractor:** KBS Construction Inc.

**Project Leader:** Jeremy Cortesio, KBS' project manager

**Architect:** Eppstein Uhen Architects Inc., Milwaukee

**Engineer:** Pierce Engineers Inc., Milwaukee

**Owner:** Monroe Neighbors LLC, Madison

Even without the cramped conditions, the job presented plenty of challenges.

**Project Cost:** \$17 million

**Project Size:** 190,000 square feet

**Start Date:** August 2005

**Completion Date:** October 2006

"It isn't a simple building," Cortesio said. "There were a lot of jogs in the building. It wasn't a building where you could use the same template over and over again. For each level, you had to revise your plan on how to frame and form the building."

Design plans for the structure were changed early on from precast concrete to cast-in-place concrete. The reduced floor-to-floor height of a cast-in-place concrete structure significantly reduced the earthwork requirements related to underground parking, shaving about \$300,000 from the project cost.

The condominium units are varied in size, but one of the consistent features throughout the building is the amount of light streaming in through the large windows.

Two stories of underground parking serve the building's users, and a municipal parking lot also is located on the site.