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# Properties

NORTHEAST OHIO'S MONTHLY REALTY, CONSTRUCTION & ARCHITECTURE MAGAZINE

## Out of the Ashes

After tragedy strikes, project partners rally to rebuild  
Cornerstone Market & Deli



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NORTHEAST OHIO'S MONTHLY REALTY, CONSTRUCTION & ARCHITECTURE MAGAZINE

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**BACK IN BUSINESS** One year after a devastating fire destroyed Cornerstone Market & Deli's original building, the family-owned business reopened within a brand new facility in Munroe Falls.

## Out of the Ashes

### After tragedy strikes, project partners rally to rebuild Cornerstone Market & Deli

By Christopher P. Trotta, AIA  
*levelHEADS, Inc.*

**D**uring adverse weather in the late evening of May 27, 2015, Cornerstone Market & Deli went through their business' most challenging hurdle. A presumed lighting strike ignited their 5,000-square-foot, single-story, brick building in Munroe Falls. In the blink of an eye, their family-owned business was destroyed.

Opened in May of 2011, the market is run by Nick and Stephanie Bartolone with the help of family and friends and the support of 27 employees. Nick is the third generation of Bartolones in the produce business, started back in the 1930s. The family goal has always been to create a lively atmosphere, employ an energetic crew and include lavish displays delighting every cus-

tomers who passed through the doors, while serving as a "cornerstone" to the community and a welcoming destination to all.

"We've touched a lot of people and they have touched us," Nick told ABC Channel 5 News that tragic evening. "We're going to rebuild. We will be back." Stephanie added, "We call each other family. Half of them were

up here last night just hugging and crying together."

These mission-centered words and caring sentiments resonated strongly with friends, family and the community they serve. A year-long mission was launched. Cornerstone Market & Deli was on a new path, not just to rebuild, but to create a more efficient operation and an opportunity to redefine their

Photos courtesy of levelHEADS, Inc.



# BAKE

GET CREATIVE

ULTRA THIN PIZZA CRUST

ULTRA THIN PIZZA CRUST

ULTRA THIN PIZZA CRUST

ULTRA THIN PIZZA CRUST

RIPE - SWEET!!

MANGO





**RUSTIC SETTING** Paint-faded wood barn siding is used to create ceiling “clouds” to help define produce and check-out areas (above), while blending with a design scheme that incorporates natural woods, exposed ductwork and a muted color palette (opposite page).

brand and create a greater atmosphere and offering to their customers. It was important for Nick and Stephanie to find the right operational model out of the space and budget they had to work within and move away from a “doing the best with what we have” mentality. This rebuild was an opportunity to make the space work best for Cornerstone, improve throughput of customers and make the store feel big while being packed full of product. The Bartolones have been in the produce and farm market business nearly all of their lives so the pressure was on to design this building correctly with an optimized store layout and efficiency.

levelHEADS, Inc. was selected to join in with the family to design the

new facility and bring the owners’ vision to life. There were many goals set forth to accomplish, including re-evaluating and customizing the space

*“It was awesome to see my friends and team that I know put this back together for my kids.”*

**Ralph Wonnell**  
*Interfinish*

for Cornerstone, while improving operations in the same amount of retail square footage. The project was built utilizing the same foundation as the original building. This presented many

challenges as far as load capacities, structural integrity due to fire damage, and fast-tracking construction. One exterior brick corner was specifically left intact to keep a connection with the original building, literally emphasizing the “Cornerstone” business name and the strength and thanks to the community they serve.

The design incorporated many architectural elements that customized the facility with a country charm resonating the quality of the service and hand-picked produce found at the market. levelHEADS utilized many reclaimed products sourced through Cleveland Art, of Chagrin Falls. They worked closely with artist Jason Wein to hand select wood and metal barn siding, lighting elements, and old carts





**KEEPING A CONNECTION** The market (top) was built utilizing the original building's foundation. In fact, one exterior brick corner was left intact (bottom) to keep a connection with the original building, literally emphasizing the "Cornerstone" business name and the strength and thanks to the community they serve.

and other furnishings, that with slight creative modification and positioning became individual elements of character and place. For example, paint-faded wood barn siding was used as "clouds" suspended from the ceiling to help define produce and check-out areas. They provided just the right amount of acoustic and way-finding clarity. Overall, the interior design was meant to serve as a backdrop with the produce, dairy, deli and bakery products as the focus through their lively colors, organization and staging.

"The design team was able to take

*"The design team was able to take all of our ideas and sketches and turn it into one of the best farm markets out there. The attention to detail was incredible and the heart and soul that was put into the building by all really shines through."*

**Nick Bartolone**

*Cornerstone Market & Deli*



all of our ideas and sketches and turn it into one of the best farm markets out there," Nick says. "The attention to detail was incredible and the heart and soul that was put into the building by all really shines through."

As far as interior finishes, the space utilized Sherwin Williams products in a color palette matching the feel of the natural products that were utilized in the space, including a darker painted ceiling to act as a backdrop for the decorative clouds, lighting and exposed HVAC ductwork running throughout the space. The flooring products used included Mohawk Select Step Luxury Vinyl Planks with a random pattern based on two colors of the plank. The goal





**DEVASTATING BLOW** In May 2015, a presumed lighting strike ignited the 5,000-square-foot, single-story, brick building. In the blink of an eye, the family-owned business was destroyed.

of the selection of the colors was to provide an older, weathered appearance to the flooring and to emulate some of the fading found on the natural woods that were used throughout the store and displays. The product is extremely durable and can hold up to quite a bit of foot traffic while still looking great. Walk-off areas entering the store at the main entrance and coming from the nursery entrance were completed with Interfinish Entry Level products. This product catches dirt and moisture from the customer's feet so that it is not carried throughout the store. Ceramic tiles were selections found at the Tile Shop, including subway tiles in the deli and wainscot walls in the toilet room with some large format patterned ceramic tiles on the floors of the toilet rooms. All products considered were selected for their natural appearance, ease of maintenance, durability, long life and return on investment.

"It was awesome to see my friends and team that I know put this back together for my kids," says Interfinish Consultant/VP of Business Development Ralph Wonnell. "Bret Martell, the construction manager for Zerbe Construction, LLC; David Parker, the concrete block and stone team; RJ, my electrical team, and my finishes team were all very excited to

be a part of this project and to get Nick and Steph up and running again."

What was most impressive throughout this entire process was the amazing Bartolone family and their blood, sweat and tears expended into the rebuild. Many long days and nights you could find Nick and his father Larry Bartolone building millwork and customized features, wiring low-voltage systems, and closing gaps between design and construction. The real story of this project is the family story and their spirit to prevail through this most trying time and to come out on the other side as a better platform to deliver higher quality services, increase the customer experience and show pride within to the community they serve. The grand opening was held on May 27, 2016, exactly one year to the day of the catalyst and life-changing fire. **P**

*Article reprinted with permission from Properties, August 2016 ([www.propertiesmag.com](http://www.propertiesmag.com)). Christopher Trotta is president of levelHEADS, Inc. and served as lead designer and principal-in-charge for the Cornerstone project. levelHEADS is a full-service consulting firm focusing on design, owner's representation, construction management, strategic planning and team integration. Trotta can be reached at 216.308.9178 and [chris@levelHEADS.us](mailto:chris@levelHEADS.us).*



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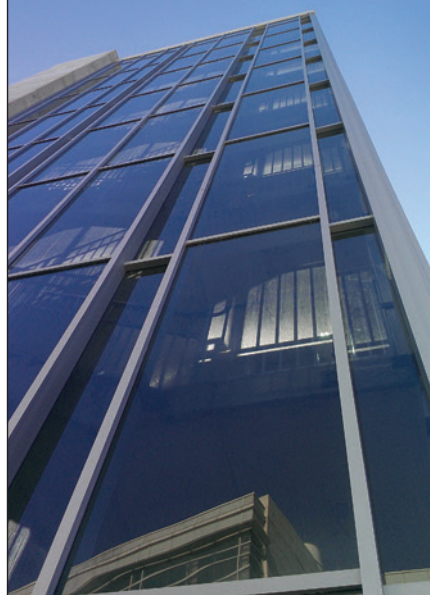
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