

A Balancing Act Between Chemetal and New Balance
Brings an Aged Aura to a Futuristic Space



A new community in Boston's Brighton neighborhood is evolving with the global headquarters of sneaker and athletic clothing manufacturer New Balance as its developer and first resident. Highly visible from the Mass Pike on the way into Boston, the New Balance headquarters resembles a boat with a shapely upturned end that's both modern and organic. This iconic structure is the newest and largest imprint of Boston Landing, a new mixed use space that its developers hail as "a new gateway to Boston." The space marries work, home and entertainment in one "social" hub that will eventually house a hotel, residential towers, additional office buildings, an ice rink that will become the Bruins new practice facility, a sports complex that will become the Celtics new practice facility, a parking garage, ground level retail shops and a system of outdoor parks.

It is all designed by one architectural firm, Elkus Manfredi Architects, the well-regarded Boston-based architectural and interior design firm known for many of Boston's biggest projects, in addition to many others all over the world. For New Balance, Elkus Manfredi was asked to envision the "workplace of the future" in designing the first building on the campus. The goal

was to bring employees out of their previous location’s private offices and into a 250,000-square-foot, five-story open office environment with walking tracks on each floor surrounding a central core of conference rooms with the latest technology. “Dedicated workspace is designed for every department and features sit-to-stand workstations for all, plus a variety of different collaboration space to fill different needs,” explains Elizabeth Lowrey, Principal and Director of Interior Architecture.



Chemetal ALU custom New Balance HQ workstations

The idea was to create the aura of an “old mill” with new materials, and this is where Chemetal, a leading manufacturer of metal designs and laminates, joined the project. “We were looking to capture the feeling of an old mill building by using the bare metal. The shape, height and many materials of the new New Balance headquarters drew their design inspiration from the old New Balance mill building in Lawrence,” states Lowrey.

Chemetal’s aluminum materials provided the solution for the interior workstations. Nancy Corbin, a specification rep from Richelieu, one of Chemetal’s distributors in Boston, worked with Paul Pickunka, VP of Sales at Chemetal, and presented large samples of Chemetal’s Alu designs.

According to Geoff Schaefer, President and Creative Director of Chemetal. “The look is essentially aged metal like you’d see in an old factory – darker, slightly patinaed and gray. The

ALU designs are a mood – the material is dipped in a darkening oxide and then hand brushed to create variations that are subtle and linear.” To a certain extent, these designs mimic the look of cold rolled steel, but in a lighter material that’s less expensive and easier to fabricate. And just like New Balance sneakers, many Chemetal materials, including the ALU designs, are made in the USA. Chemetal is based in Easthampton, MA, a former mill town about two hours west of Boston. This year the company doubled its footprint, expanding into a now 70,000 foot manufacturing and office space. Even though Chemetal is in a newer space, “we’re very familiar with old factory spaces. We still own and use several in the area for our other businesses,” says Schaefer. “We pull design ideas from them, looking at old industrial freight elevators, factory doors and beat up metal supportive flooring. We recreate some of these looks in sheets of aluminum, brass and copper.”

The ALU designs from Chemetal are part of that creative and fit the desired look of bare metal. Of the three - ALU light, ALU Medium and ALU Dark - Elkus Manfredi preferred a custom ALU design based on ALU Medium. These custom Chemetal pieces, cut-to-size, were to be used as panels in Allsteel workstations. Chemetal worked out the details with Union Office, a Boston-based dealer for Allsteel, and with their fabricator, Pat Andre of Coastal Woodworking in Peabody, MA, who took hundreds of sheets of Chemetal custom ALU and laminated them onto a thin backer to fit as workstation panels.

“We used the ALU product along the major circulation paths on the AllSteel workstation panels in lieu of panel fabric,” states Elizabeth Lowrey. “We were very happy with the material and results. Chemetal was great to help coordinate using their product on the AllSteel workstation panels.”

Chemetal works hard to offer great materials and customer service. It’s a family-owned company in business for over 50 years that’s focused on being one of the world’s largest sources of metal designs and laminates with materials like brushed aluminum, oxidized brass, hpl metals and more. Chemetal makes many original materials in-house – creative with a manufacturing consistency – and sources others from all over the world.

“We were really happy to be part of the New Balance project,” says Schaefer. “We took the whole company to a Red Sox game last year and on the way into Boston pointed out the New Balance building where all the ALU was installed. Everyone – sales, customer service, production guys who made the material – thought it was pretty cool. And they’re right.”