

Industrial Properties Rehabilitation Case Studies



Elk Mountain Steam Plant/ William H. Mull Building

1916 Town of Woodfin
2028 Riverside Drive
Asheville, NC

38,000 sq ft
Government offices
1916

The Elk Mountain Steam Plant was built on the banks of the French Broad River by Captain W.T. Weaver, who also built the Craggy Dam and Marshall Hydroelectric Plants to supply electric power throughout the Asheville area. In 1926 CP&L took ownership of the Plant. An active coal fired, steam power generator from 1916 to 1954, Elk Mountain went on standby status until 1964. Burlington Mills purchased the plant in conjunction with its nearby mill and mill village and used the plant for some minor manufacturing and storage until the early 1990's. Unfortunately, in 1980 the original smokestack was demolished. The property was purchased from Burlington Mills by a group of investors who converted the vacant mill into a mixed use commercial center called Riverside Business Park. The Park, which is still in operation, consists of a series of shops and businesses. The Steam Plant, which was located on the mill property, was not part of the Park conversion.

In the mid 1990's, Ben Slosman, a local leader, real estate developer, member of the Metropolitan Sewerage District Board, and an advocate for cost-effective building reclamation brought to the board, the vision of purchasing and renovating the vacant Steam Plant for use as its centralized offices. At that time the MSD was operating out of five different locations spread throughout the area. Mr. Slosman argued that the plant was in a central location, was an important part of local history, and could accommodate the needs of the MSD offices. The Board agreed with Mr. Slosman's vision and purchased the plant and some adjacent property in 1996 for \$425,000. The rehabilitation and retrofit took nearly two years and was dedicated in honor of long-time executive director, William H. Mull. Mr. Slosman passed away in 2000 and never saw his dream through to completion. The project has been widely hailed as a success, creating a much more efficient operation of the MSD. Its retention saved an important piece of the area's built environment and has provided a first class facility and unique working environment that is greatly appreciated by both employees and visitors who come to transact business.

Quick Stats

Description of Surrounding Area

The mill is located on a 4 acre tract within the corporate limits of the Town of Woodfin. The property is adjacent to a former Burlington Mill that has been renovated as a business park.

Problems and Resolutions

Environmental issues were limited to asbestos insulation on pipes. Ground contamination issues were avoided by retaining the original footprint of the building. The biggest challenge involved the existing tile roof. Original Ludowici interlocking roofing tiles were intact, but the roof substrate was badly deteriorated. Initial proposal was to remove the original roof and replace with an insulated foam metal composite roof. After it was discovered that the original Italian tile maker was still in existence, the decision was made to restore the original tile roof. Windows were replaced in some parts of the building, but replacements were selected to replicate the original fenestration.

Architects/Builders/Owner

Architects: Conway Dameron, Jr., A.I.A. William K. Langdon, A.I.A.

Builder: Jerry Payne Const. Co.

Owner: Metropolitan Sewerage District of Buncombe County , N.C.

Cost

Total renovation cost - \$5.3 million, including an additional 5 acres

Per square foot cost-\$140 / s.f. including furnishings , \$105/s.f. exclusive of furnishings. One of the factors in renovating instead of building new was the value of the conserved land that was deemed to make the relatively high construction cost worthwhile.

Cost estimates for new construction for same use - \$125-130/s.f.

Source of Funding

Local - Metropolitan Sewerage District of Buncombe County , NC - local revenue bonds

Tax credits were not used

Renovation Success

There is no doubt that the consolidation of over 100 workers from five different locations has created a more efficient operation for the MSD. The office building is a stunning headquarters and a good example of true adaptive reuse, where the new use is genuinely different from the former use.

Source of Funding

Private - Federal and NC state tax credits were used

Use

District offices of the Metropolitan Sewerage District (MSD) of Buncombe County.

Community Benefits

The renovation of Elk Mountain Steam Plant has created a more customer-friendly location and one-stop location for persons dealing with the MSD. Worker morale and pride is very high. The response in the community has been positive.

Description of Property

38,000 square foot masonry structure located on 4 acre site.

Date of Construction - July, 1916

Local, state, national designation - Listed in National Register of Historic Places

Date of renovation - early 1990's

Awards

Griffin Award - local - Preservation Society of Asheville/Buncombe County 2001.

First Annual Smart Growth Award - Smart Growth Partners of Western North Carolina-2001

Description of Outcome

Status – Complete

Community response to the project has been favorable. The overall appearance of the riverfront was enhanced by retaining the rhythm of the roof lines of the buildings along the river. The Town of Woodfin has developed a riverfront Park for its citizens' enjoyment, adjacent to the revitalized Riverside Business Park . The Elk Mountain road was widened and improved recently.