

Allen-Rogers Mill, Laconia

Overview

The former Allen-Rogers Mill closed in 1998 and was vacant for about five years. DES worked with Chinburg Builders to redevelop this Winnepesaukee riverfront mill complex, and the second phase of this \$7 million redevelopment project was approved in July 2011 and is now underway.

History

The Allen-Rogers Mill was part of the Laconia Car Company Complex located off Water Street and Beacon Street West. Laconia Car Company established operations here in 1848. The complex included 54 buildings with woodworking shops, foundries, painting shops and warehouses on 14 acres. By 1899, the company was consuming 4 million feet of lumber per year to make railroad cars and later trolley cars. By 1912, the industry was the city's largest employer, with 1,000 workers. After the company closed in the early 1930s, the site was divided into other businesses. Allen-Rogers owned a

large portion of the site (5.6 acres) from 1934 to 1999. Its factory made a variety of wood turned products, including golf tees, furniture parts, toys, games and eggs for an annual children's program at the White House. New owners closed the company in 1998 and sold its water rights to Algonquin Power Systems Inc., which maintains the Avery Dam. The mill was vacant until 2003 and had been damaged by a small fire in one of the mill buildings when it was sold to Chinburg Builders for redevelopment.

At A Glance:

Site Location: Downtown Laconia

Site Profile: Former Allen-Rogers Mill
Redevelopment

DES ODD Fund Reimbursements: \$94,143

DES Revolving Loan Fund Loan: \$500,000

Outcomes:

- 150 tons of contaminated soil removed and properly disposed of.
- Comprehensive site investigation completed.
- Closure of the site
- First phase completed and the second phase of 7+ million dollar redevelopment project approved in July 2011.

Environmental Assessment and Cleanup

The owners of the Allen-Rogers Mill removed 13 underground storage tanks and numerous aboveground storage tanks between 1963 and 1989. The DES database contains 14 registered underground tanks and four aboveground tanks with an aggregate capacity of 78,950 gallons. The tanks contained a variety of solvents, heating oil, diesel, gasoline and other materials. An Oil and Hazardous Material Site Evaluation was completed in 1990 and included test pits and soil borings in former UST areas. The investigation detected petroleum impacted soil and led to additional site investigation activities. After many delays a site investigation was completed in 1997. The investigation recommended removal of contaminated soil and concluded that chlorinated volatile organic compounds (VOCs) were present in groundwater above ambient

groundwater quality standards. Additional delays caused by cash flow problems at the Allen-Rogers Mill resulted in no follow up on the 1997 findings until the mill was sold. Chinburg Builders, the new owner, completed building demolition activities in the summer of 2003. A previously unknown 10,000 gallon underground storage tank was removed during these activities and low levels of petroleum contamination were encountered. A supplemental site investigation was submitted May 29, 2004 that further delineated soil and groundwater contamination and investigated the newly discovered tank release. In 2005, Chinburg Builders applied for participation in the DES Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund program. The funding was essential during this phase of the project because of the lack of financing available for completing the environmental work on the project. The \$500,000 loan paid for lead, asbestos and indoor air mitigation.

In 2006, a soil boring program was completed to delineate petroleum contaminated soil and a groundwater quality assessment report was completed. The groundwater quality assessment report indicated that the source of the chlorinated VOCs was offsite and, in April 2007, DES sent a request for information from Henry's Dry Cleaning, a potential source for the contamination. Also in 2007, additional investigation into the extent of petroleum impacted soil was completed.

The remedy for the property was multi-faceted. An activity and use restriction (AUR) was put into place in 2009 to restrict contact with lead impacted soil. The lead impacted soil was placed under a geosynthetic clay liner, which was situated under outdoor patios and landscaping. The AUR ensures that the liner is not disturbed and that the lead impacted soil poses no risk. The chlorinated VOCs in groundwater posed a more complicated risk due to the potential for impact to indoor air quality in the building. The ambitious response to this issue was the installation of passive vapor intrusion mitigation measures. This consisted of sealing off building No. 6 with a high density polyethylene plastic, Liquid Boot[®], and installation of a passive sub-slab venting system. Indoor air monitoring is conducted to demonstrate the system's effectiveness. DES has approved the implementation reports for these remedial measures and the petroleum projects have been closed. The combination of reimbursement for Oil Discharge and Disposal Cleanup Fund (ODD Fund) eligible costs and the revolving loan fund money were essential for progress with the redevelopment because of the crucial timing of the assistance and lack of conventional financing.



Views of the empty mill buildings prior to redevelopment.

Redevelopment Project Success

Chinburg Builders acquired the former Allen-Rogers factory on Beacon Street West in 2003. They received planning board approval in 2004 to build rental units, condos, townhouses and commercial space on the 5.6 acres of factory property. There were 14 buildings located onsite and early efforts consisted of demolition of the smaller and obsolete structures. The first phase of 48 one- and two-bedroom rental apartments was due to be on the market at the end of 2004, but the project stalled, according to city officials.

City Manager Eileen Cabanel said at the time, "Yes, it has languished for awhile, but once they found there was no market for high-end rentals, they turned it into condos," she said. "And it's working." Once a model unit -- with exposed brick and wood floors and views of the river -- was made available for view, Cabanel said, they sold many quickly. The units were listed from \$99,000 to \$200,000. The West Beacon Street phase of construction resulted in a total of five dozen condos that are now completely sold out.



Proposed Master Plan
Laconia Millworks LLC
Laconia, New Hampshire
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Original 2003 Redevelopment Plan

In July 2011, the Laconia Planning Board approved the next phase of the redevelopment of the former Allen-Rogers woodturning plant: converting a portion of building No. 3 into 26 residential rental units and commercial space. The project also includes rebuilding building No. 1, a structure over the old Perley Canal that was heavily damaged on March 5, 2008 by high winds and a heavy snow load on the roof.



Pictures of the redevelopment: The picture at the left shows the property's portion of the recently completed mile long river walk. The picture on the right shows the exterior of the renovated mill buildings and finished landscaping.