

Former Scott & Williams Mill, Laconia

Overview

The former Scott & Williams factory was underutilized and was extremely contaminated by releases from storage tanks and the factory's boiler complex. The Laconia Housing and Redevelopment Authority (LHA) purchased the property for redevelopment without understanding the full extent of contamination associated with the boiler complex. DES worked with LHA during the redevelopment of the property to ensure the contamination was addressed and to minimize the impact of the remedial process on the redevelopment schedule. The property has been redeveloped into the Normandin Square apartment complex with 60 apartments and several businesses.

History

Scott & Williams were manufacturers of knitting machines used in the large knitting mills running at the time. Their circular knitting machine revolutionized sock manufacturing. They were one of the largest manufacturers in the country, even exporting machines across the ocean to other countries, such as Britain. Global economic competition impacted the company and by the mid-1900s, competition from Italian knitting machines had forced Scott and Williams out of business. In the years that followed, the factory was converted to shoe production, but it never regained the dynamism of its early years. By the late 1970s, space in the complex was leased to a number of small businesses, but most of the building was vacant and dilapidated. In 2001, key elements came together to make possible the redevelopment of the former factory as a mixed-use, mixed-income initiative. The owner of the property realized its commercial potential was limited, while the LHA offered a proposal for the site — mixed-income housing with ground-floor commercial space for nonprofits —

At A Glance:

Site Location: 22 Strafford Street, Laconia

Site Profile: Former Scott and Williams Mill Complex redeveloped into apartments and commercial space

DES Reimbursements: \$169,150

Outcomes:

- 2,020 tons of heavily contaminated soil removed and properly disposed of
- Comprehensive site investigation completed.
- Site closed after extensive remediation completed during redevelopment.



Scott & Williams Mill Complex (four story building): The circled building is the boiler complex (later demolished).

that was acceptable to a broad range of community stakeholders. The plan was to rehabilitate the large mill complex into 60 apartments, 23,000 square feet of commercial space and a public park. Demolition of the boiler complex during renovations revealed widespread petroleum contamination that significantly complicated execution of the project. The project was funded by housing grants (\$300,000 Affordable Housing Program Grant, \$824,000 subsidized advance and \$260,173 advance subsidy) and LHA, but the grants did not provide funding for the additional cost for petroleum release cleanup.¹

Environmental Assessment and Cleanup

LHA developed an approach with DES that integrated the large scale, contaminated soil excavation into the ongoing renovation project. DES committed to working with LHA, and visited the site during crucial time periods throughout the construction work to coordinate with their contractor. One of the most complex parts of the remediation was the removal of petroleum contamination adjacent to the retaining wall on the banks of Jewett Brook. The contractor was able to remove almost all of the contamination without undermining the retaining wall. The Oil Discharge and Disposal Cleanup Fund (ODD Fund) paid the contractor directly for the cleanup costs. This kept the project funding on track and saved LHA from costly change orders for the project. During the project 2,020 tons of contaminated soil and 30,978 gallons of contaminated oil and water were removed. The contaminated site was closed in February 2006 based on confirmation samples obtained from soil and groundwater. Closure of the site helped pave the way for this successful 2006 redevelopment project.²

Redevelopment Project Success

In 2006, LHA became the developer of the Normandin Square/Scott & Williams project. Sixty apartments were created and rented in record time. In addition, new facilities were created for the Lakes Region Child Care Center, LRGHealthcare Wellness Center and Health First, which provide medical and child care services to the community. Normandin Square is located near downtown Laconia with a pharmacy, bank, churches, restaurants, drug stores and the high school within walking distance.



The reuse created much needed rental housing, located health and child-care services in affordable condominium space close to the people who would use them, and led to the opening of several new businesses in the neighborhood, says Charlotte DuBois, executive director of the Laconia Housing Authority. Many jobs available in Laconia are seasonal, making the need for affordable housing critical for permanent residents. Ms. Naczas, the LHA manager for this property, said, “The only option for many working people in the area is to find a job in the city that pays modest wages. Your average resident of Laconia often struggles to find quality affordable housing.”¹

¹Much of the information and some of the text is obtained from the Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston 2010 Annual Report.

² The mill complex had three underground storage tanks (15,000, 15,000 and 500 gallons) and one 15,000 gallon aboveground storage tank during its operation.