Category: Best Building Project (Under $10million – General Contractor)
Contractor: Saunders Heath Construction
Project Name: Windsor Mill

In the early morning hours of Aug. 6, 2017, the historic Windsor Mill (The Mill), in Windsor, Colo., went up in flames as an arsonist set fire to the small town's iconic building. Saunders Heath was just shy three months from completing the core and shell construction of the building. The 119-year-old structure had faced many misfortunes from the beginning — suffering its first fire nine years after it was constructed in 1899, a tornado in 2008 left it vacant and abandoned for a decade, and then just as it was being brought back to life in 2017, an arsonist left the historic building in almost complete ruin.

Real estate developer and owner Blue Ocean Enterprises stayed committed to the project, the Town of Windsor, VFLA and Saunders Heath to see the project to fruition. Planning for the reconstruction of The Mill began to take shape a few months after it was left in rubble. Due to the depth of destruction, The Mill was no longer considered a historic renovation but new construction that needed to meet current building codes. However, every effort was made to use every original beam, brick and piece of wood they could salvage from the original building. Completing the construction of the building was vital to the Town of Windsor, as it's viewed as a catalyst project to future developments in the downtown area.

Reconstruction of The Mill commenced in September 2018. The redesign took on a different shape and size than the previous restoration effort. The now two-story, 24,000-square-foot project includes a total of three buildings: the mill, the annex and silo. The annex and silo survived the fire with little to no damage. The Mill was completely reconstructed and houses restaurant, an office and event space.

Project Execution and Team Approach

It was extremely important to the owner, design team and construction team to pay homage to the original Mill. VFLA carefully chose building materials that would replicate materials used in the original 1890 building while also incorporating many of the surviving foundation and structural elements from the existing building. Boardform concrete was used for all exposed foundations to replicate period appropriate foundations. The same mix of siding types from the original Mill were incorporated, as well as incorporating high ceilings to make the two-story structure have a similar presence as the previous four-story.

The use of true heavy timber and faux heavy timber where structural elements were exposed and tying these elements together in a seamless manner challenged both the design and construction team on various levels. As an example, the second floor rough sawn 3x12 timber joists and 12x12 timber beams were severely damaged in the 2017 fire. The damage was wide spread and random, not constrained to a certain area of the ceiling that was to be left exposed. The project team worked with the architect, engineer and owner constantly through site meetings to develop a plan to disassemble the entire ceiling and some of the timber support structure and put it back together with a mix of reclaimed and new timber. The end result represents the path of the fire and provided a beautiful finished product.

Construction Innovations

During the 2017 historical renovation, owner and developer Blue Ocean Enterprises stored all unused existing brick and timber materials from the original Windsor Mill at an off-site location. Unaware at the time, their ability to salvage these materials would play an integral part into rebuilding of The Mill in 2018 after arson destroyed most of the original building. The post-arson remnants left a single-story brick box sitting on a nearly untouched stone foundation. After the fire, the design took on a life to pay respect to the historic mill. The additive vernacular of The Mill construction became the team's focus. The gabled roof and elevated volume at the front honor the historical shape of The Mill. The eastern single-story volume was wrapped in a rich red ship-lap siding, which

matches the historical siding. Oversized wood timbers highlight the front entry canopy that is located in a similar location as the original 1890 design. A variety of exterior materials and window types were used to highlight the agrarian architectural style. Black brick was used in lieu of red brick to respect the historic red brick that survived the latest fire.

Environment/Safety

Although, the project did not pursue LEED certification, sustainability practices were implemented throughout the project by reusing as many original materials that were salvaged from the fire as well as previously purchased materials. Our site safety program was developed to encompass many layers to ensure the safety of everyone on site. We believe in the following process because it has led us to be more proactive in safety and prevent injuries before they occur.

- **Preconstruction Meetings**- Key areas of work that would create the most hazardous situations were identified before the project started. Preconstruction meetings were scheduled with subcontractors' site supervisory teams to discuss expectations for safety, quality and productivity.
- **Orientations**- As soon as subcontractors mobilized on site, each employee would attend a site-specific orientation detailing the current state of the project and their safety responsibilities.
- **All Hands Safety Meetings**- We held monthly all hands safety meeting to detail upcoming work and the hazards associated with the work.
- **Site Audits**- Our site management team conducted safety audits detailing their findings using BIM 360. BIM 360 compiled the information and sent the affected subcontractors their specific findings. The subcontractors are then required to close the finding in BIM 360. All open findings generate an email to the subcontractors daily until the findings are closed.
- **Stop Work Authority Program**- All employees on our project have the right and responsibility to stop work if they see something that is not safe. We promote this through our orientations, preconstruction meetings, all hands safety meetings and

site walks. No employee will be reprimanded if they choose to stop work for a safety issue.

Excellence in Client Service and Contribution to the Community

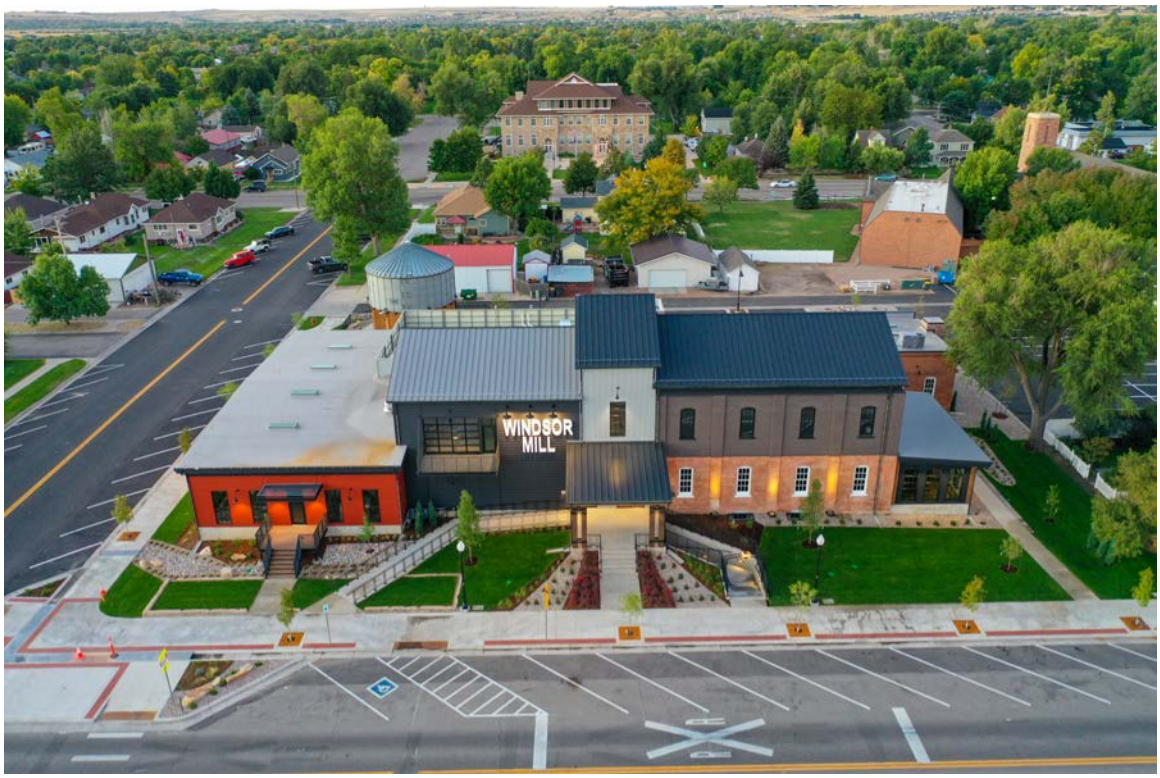
The rehabilitation of The Mill was extremely important to the small-town community of Windsor, Colorado. The building was an iconic landmark on Main Street, but it had been left as an eyesore for over a decade. When construction efforts finally began, the excitement and buzz around town was nearly impossible to ignore. Numerous residents would stop by the construction site to tell their personal stories and memories of the Windsor Mill and how excited they were to see it being brought back to life. The municipality was also very invested in the project, as it was viewed as a catalyst project to future developments in the downtown area and would drive more residents and visitors to other downtown shops and town amenities. Through all of the ups and downs the project has endured, the redevelopment acts as a gateway to downtown Windsor, celebrates Windsor's past and looks to inspire a sense of resiliency.

The Windsor Mill pre-construction in 2017. Nine years after a tornado ripped through the town and tore off half of the second story of the brick building.

The Windsor Mill – August 6, 2017. Three months away from the original project completion

The Windsor Mill – August 7, 2017 the morning after an arsonist burned down the building.

The Windsor Mill - September 2019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The basement of the Windsor Mill in 2017

The Basement of the Windsor Mill 2019. The majority of the original brick, timber and joists were salvaged from the fire.

The main corridor of the building is filled with historic pictures of the Windsor Mil, including photos of the most recent 2017 fire.