

A New Beginning for Historic Globe Mills

An uncut diamond in Sacramento's collection of heritage buildings, the Globe Mills was built during a time of rapid growth and prosperity. For more than 40 years, this iconic and yet dilapidated building stood on the corner of C & 12th Streets. Abandoned and structurally dangerous, developers Cyrus Youssefi and Skip Rosenbloom, along with local preservation architect Mike Malinowski AIA, the City of Sacramento and the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency (SHRA) took on one of Sacramento's largest development challenges with the decision to rehabilitate and preserve the Globe Mills.

With the gold rush in full swing in the late 1800's and America's ever-growing population moving west, the need for basic commodities was steadily increasing. In response to the overwhelming need, the Phoenix Milling Company constructed the new five-story Globe Mills, making it the seventh operating flour mill in the Sacramento area. From 1914 to 1968 the mill underwent epic growth, switching ownership three times. With an expansion by Pillsbury in 1942, the Globe Mills evolved into one of the largest mills in California. Due to changing economic conditions, operations slowed until Pillsbury finally closed their doors in 1968, leaving the Globe Mills to collect dust for the next four decades.

Plagued by multiple fires, rotten wood and the impacts from unwelcome "visitors," the Globe Mills narrowly escaped demolition when local preservationist, Bruce Boohers passionately lobbied against the destruction of the buildings which were determined to be an "imminent danger" by the City in the mid-1990's. In 2003, the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency solicited bids from developers to rehabilitate what, at that time, was considered to be the largest blight in the City of Sacramento. "Saving the Globe Mills required a walk through a very complex and twisted path," said architect Mike Malinowski.

Upon receiving permission to move forward from SHRA, the design team began creating a workable project concept. "The Agency didn't know what they wanted to see," said developer, Cyrus Youssefi. "Sixteen individual and fully developed concepts were created in an effort to address each stakeholder's concerns."

"Public participation in the conceptual design of the Globe was a huge success; the community really got behind the project. Our team was looking for the design to be embraced, not just accepted or tolerated," said Malinowski.

From the initial stages of the Environmental Impact Review (EIR) through council approval of the EIR, funding and plans approval, the project was met with tremendous support from the city. The entitlements and approvals took just one year and two months to complete. Cyrus Youssefi commented that, "Everyone wanted to get it done, and it took the whole team to make it happen."

The final design consisted of an adaptive re-use of the former grain and barley storage facilities which were transformed into market rate lofts and apartments. Miyamoto International, the structural engineers on board, performed elaborate computer modeling to verify the adequacy of the existing silo structures. This included several sections of concrete structural walls that were cut out and removed in order to add stair towers, elevators and other public spaces within the actual silos themselves. In addition, two new buildings were developed to create spaces for affordable housing; which became a critical component to the project's funding through tax credits.

One of the greatest challenges this development team faced was that Globe Mills resides in what some would consider the weakest end of the Alkali Flatts corridor. "We jumped into the fire with this project. Now that it's all said and done, we hope that the Globe Mills

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Views of the newly redeveloped Globe Mills.

inspires confidence in the fact that we can take abandoned sites and turn them into activity generators in depressed areas of town," commented Malinowski.

The rebirth of the Globe Mills was a "Labor of love," according to Cyrus Youssefi. "It was a team effort from the City of Sacramento to our consultants and subcontractors. I can't over emphasize this enough, without them...no project."

Judged impossible as a project only 10 years ago, today the Globe Mills is a once again an icon of progress, vision and teamwork; and a sterling example of the power of public-private partnerships in getting even the toughest projects completed.

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