



BUILDING BLOCKS

Mills Group Newsletter

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Greetings and Welcome to a New Year at the Mills Group!

This is the first issue of a quarterly newsletter that will keep you up to date with what is going on at 206 High Street. We're starting off the New Year with several new projects which will be highlighted in the coming months. 2007 was an eventful year at here at the Mills Group, and 2008 is shaping up to be bigger yet. Please join us every quarter as we share our excitement about the months ahead and recap those behind. Thanks for being a valued "contact" and welcome to the Mills Group.

High Street's Missing Tooth De Lazy Lizard Facade Remodel



The building that is currently housing De Lazy Lizard has long been known by those working to maintain Morgantown's historic architectural heritage as the "missing tooth". The owner came to us a couple of months ago expressing his desire to update the facade in hopes of bringing in new clientele. In our design concept meetings we have produced a design that will be a contemporary bar and dine-in eatery, integrating historic architectural components such as iron railings and a classic storefront with modern elements such as the use of the *NanaWall* system. The use of these "removable glass walls" will provide versatility for the dining areas by being an outdoor cafe in the summer time, but a cozy indoor eatery in colder months.

[Click here to download the project sheet for the full story](#)

An Introduction...

Michael Mills

Principal
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Michael is the founding principal of the Mills Group-*Architecture, Planning, and Preservation*. He is has thirteen years of experience in historical preservation, architectural design, and planning. Through his extensive work with historic structures, he has a detailed working knowledge of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation Projects. The other aspects of his work include historic design guidelines and the issues related the revitalization of main streets across the country. He leads the Mills Group with his guiding philosophy of balancing the "social-economic-environmental-physical aspects of our built environment, leading to responsible and well-thought out design.

Jessica Brewer

Director of Cultural Resource Management
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Jessica has a combined education which includes an Associate's & Bachelor's Degree in Architectural Engineering, a Master's Degree in History, and Certificate in Cultural Resource Management. "To understand our built environment, or anything for that matter, all cultural influences should be considered." Cultural resources, which can be spiritual or physical, such as photographs, your Great Grandma's quilt, or a building, determine who we are and how we view the world, ultimately affecting how we function within society. Where we come from, our cultural history, determines who we are as a person. The interpretation of Cultural Resources celebrates the human spirit, by taking components of tangible history, such as a building or a battle site, pulling the pieces together, and making it accessible to all of us.

Billy Plyler

Director of Sustainability
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Billy has experience in several different genres of architecture, ranging from small scale high-end hospitality to large scale educational projects. In all of his professional and educational experiences, he seeks to develop a true understanding of the holistic impacts of the architecture we build. Through this, he has a tremendous interest in and knowledge about "Green"/Sustainable Design, especially alternative means of construction. He strives to make these ideas applicable to and feasible for all projects.

Veronica Naughton

Interior Design
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Veronica is an interior design major at West Virginia University. Her experience includes residential and commercial design projects. Her specialty is historic interiors, leading her to attend Nantucket Island's study abroad program. Nantucket, Massachusetts is one of the foremost experts in interior historic preservation awareness.

2007 at a glance..

2007 was a tremendous year of growth for The Mills Group. We started off the year still at the home office, but by May we had made the big move to 206 High Street. As anyone knows, a move is a huge adjustment, but moving an entire office, computer network, library, and project roster, was no small task. I think we will all agree that we are just now feeling as though we are settling in. I think we all were quite grateful to have our own professional organizer to make the transition smoother. Thanks Julie!

Kid's Day 2007

As we've become a part of the downtown, we have had the opportunity to participate in their annual activities. First was their "Kid's Day 2007." During this day long festival where High Street is virtually shut down from vehicular traffic, local businesses provide activities for kids and their parents to share, giving them the opportunity to spend the day having fun together. Here at the Mills Group, we developed a "Where's Waldo?" type scavenger hunt game utilizing downtown architectural components, and coloring sheets featuring a couple of our current projects.

The Arts Walk & Open House

During late Summer Downtown Morgantown held an "Arts Walk" event, where artisans were invited into local businesses to showcase their work to crowds of people touring up and down High Street. We invited local artist Lorna Vantor whose marvelous sculpture work dazzled kids and adults alike.

We took this opportunity to not only present artisan work but ours as well. During the evening we held an open house to meet and greet new faces, as well as welcome those already familiar with our work. Invitations were sent out shortly before the event to encourage all to come in and see our new office space.

Going Green, Going LEED, Going to D.C.

During December we somehow found the time to begin preparing ourselves to become LEED certified. We are very passionate about true "green" design and hope to have at least three of our staff LEED certified by Spring. In preparation, Michael and Billy trekked to Washington D.C. in early December for the "LEED Conference" to find out the latest and greatest in green building technologies and materials.

Being LEED certified means being informed and keeping up to date with the latest regulations, procedures and products in "green design" so that we can help our clients make the most informed choice possible when it comes to choosing design options and materials. If you are interested in knowing more about some of these ideas and materials, visit the following websites.

Beyond the Paradigm

Sustainability Meets Historic Preservation

Jessica Brewer

Preserving and/or adaptively reusing a historic building is in itself a highly sustainable act. Sustainability is not just about using environmentally friendly products or solar power, but should be thought of as "responsible design." In "responsible design", one does utilize "friendly" materials and sources of energy where possible but they also reuse what components they can, utilize local materials and labor if possible, and proceed through a project with the mindset of "how can I have the most positive impact on not only the environment but the people living in that environment?"

Preserving a building and reusing it for another purpose requires thoughtful and conscientious design. Often much of existing building materials can be maintained, and the repair or the introduction of new materials can take advantage of the local labor market. When materials cannot be reused or recycled, a small amount of effort can solicit local products and labor that not only help support the respective economy, but work to maintain the building's "sense of place", its connection to a particular town, community, region, or geographical location.

Older buildings do require major overhauls at times with regard to mechanical and electrical systems, but can prove to adapt rather well to the introduction of energy efficient materials and components. If completed in a responsible and comprehensive manner, these updated structures can perform just as well as new ones.

The most important component in the preservation of old structures, versus razing and building new, is the culture and history that is saved. It is almost never, even though it may seem like it, that less work and expense will be required to tear down an old building and erect a new. Adaptive reuse just requires a different way of thinking. What can I do that is best for my community? Maintaining its "tangible" history, heritage and culture through preserving its built environment can revitalize a community, invigorate it, and quite often will prove to be contagious. In reality, Sustainability and Historic Preservation are not on opposite ends of the spectrum. They have common goals of ultimately improving the well-being and quality of life in a community and when used together as a part of the overall process can prove to be an efficient, positive and responsible approach to design.

Designing on the Principles of the Past and Preserving for the Future

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