

LS3P

Vacant to Vibrant
Vernon Malone College & Career Academy



Share a Coke.

An empty building, formerly a Coca-Cola bottling plant, languished in a South Raleigh neighborhood. The neighborhood bore the burden of this lost building, occupying valuable land on a downtown corridor but devoid of activity. Meanwhile, a significant number of high school students occupied nearby classrooms, not fully participating in educational programs which didn't quite fit.

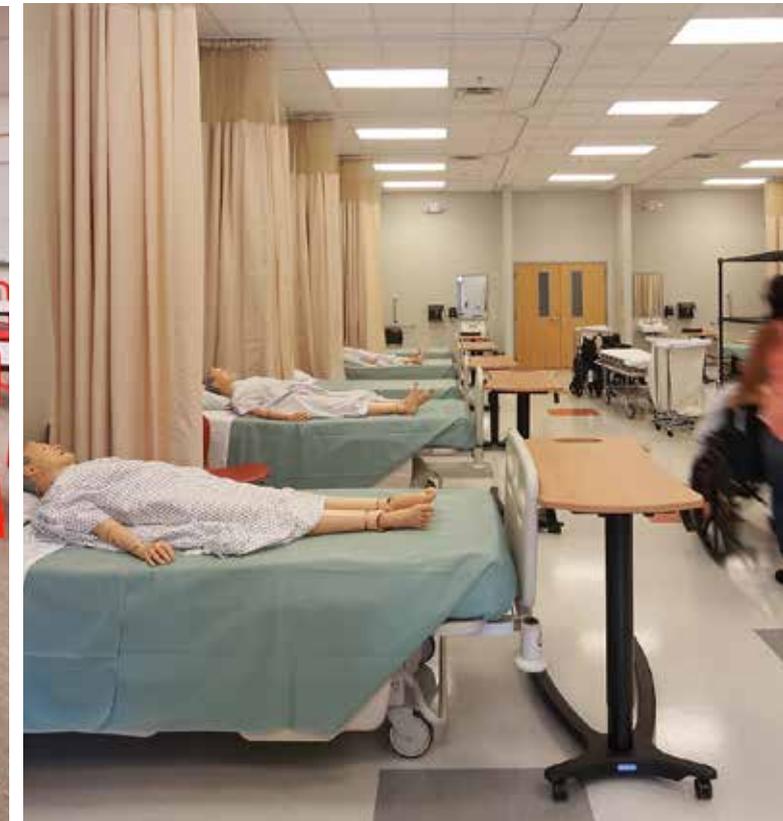
Stagnation benefits no one, and so the prime stakeholders came together to hatch a plan. A three-way collaboration between the Wake County School Board, Wake County, and Wake Technical Community College created a curriculum designed to set things in motion. This unprecedented collaboration offered a unique win-win-win opportunity: to salvage an underutilized site, provide a leading-edge alternative educational facility for high schoolers, and expand educational options for local community college students. The project was spearheaded by Wake County Facilities Design and Construction, and involved continuous review and input from the boards governing each of the three partners, including the Wake County Board of Education, the Wake County Commissioners, and the Wake Tech Board of Trustees.

Aimed at closing achievement gaps and

encouraging career development for students seeking to develop their skills outside of a traditional high school setting, this new program, the first of its kind in Wake County, offers students the opportunity to gain valuable real-world skills which apply directly to college or career development. This new curriculum is designed to be engaging and relevant, with the ultimate goal of opening doors to advanced education and opportunities with marketable career prospects.

The old Coca-Cola bottling plant, which consisted of a single-story 1950's vintage block and brick warehouse and 2 pre-engineered metal buildings, provided the ideal canvas to help set this new plan in motion. Once a center for production, the underutilized space accommodates over 700 students, and has been transformed into a state-of-the-art facility for career and technology programs. The building houses career programs such as electrical systems engineering, biopharmaceutical technology, health sciences, cosmetology, business information technology, welding, plumbing, auto collision repair, and simulation & game development. Support spaces include administrative offices, classrooms, labs, and a student commons area. High schoolers fill the classrooms during the school day, and Wake Tech programs utilize the space during the evening hours.

LS3P worked closely with Wake County, WCPSS, and Wake Tech to create, and achieve, the



following key design goals for the project:

Give new life to an old building

The project transformed an outmoded building into an engaging, active, useful space. Its new energy and attractive, contemporary façade has created a sense of pride for students, the neighborhood, and the wider community while preserving the history of the site. By bringing new purpose to this “lost” building, the partnership saved resources and injected activity and life into a quiet industrial area.

Create an exciting, welcoming environment for students and staff

For these students, school has become a “cool” place to be. This environment is designed to encourage students to engage with the school’s educational opportunities, with the ultimate goal of motivating them to stay in school, graduate, and start on a path towards a productive life. The industrial aesthetic of the existing building complements the technical side of program, with special spaces such as the innovative “learning commons” fostering collaboration and a spirit of community in an adult-like hang-out space.

Showcase the value of learning

The school’s innovative programs are on full display, with leading-edge spaces for instruction and dynamic, highly visible learning spaces.

Facilitate collaboration between Wake County Schools and Wake Tech

In order to support a successful collaboration between WCPSS and Wake Tech, LS3P designed the school for effective flow and spontaneous overlaps between programs. Central gathering spaces feel more like college than high school, and the overall campus environment is safe, welcoming, and adaptable for a wide variety of educational functions.

Provide a successful example of adaptive re-use

The project proceeded smoothly from site selection through design and construction, offering a viable alternative to new construction for future educational projects. In addition to reclaiming a fading industrial campus, the new school is distinctive and engaging, offering students a unique educational experience while offering a building of which the neighbors can be proud.

The resulting design is light-filled, transparent, highly efficient, and welcoming. The building program is centered around a dynamic bright orange wall that “slices” through the original building, adding a sense of vitality and movement beneath the new light wells which fill the space with daylight. It’s a design intervention which matches the activity inside: providing new opportunities and encouraging new directions.



The interior design incorporates elements that align with the industrial aesthetic of the existing building and the technical side of the program, with low-maintenance and durable materials. The learning commons area fosters collaboration and a spirit of community in an “adult-like” hang out space.

The exterior of the building reflects the spirit of the adaptive re-use transformation, integrating new design elements to capture the spirit of the program while economically utilizing the existing building skin. The design included a number of strategies for sustainability in order to reduce energy costs, minimize construction impacts, and provide a healthier learning environment for students. The most important sustainable

strategy for the project was the decision to re-use an existing building, taking advantage of its embodied energy and reducing the negative environmental effects of demolishing and landfilling debris from an entire building.

During the construction process, construction waste was sorted and recycled wherever possible. The exterior walls were furred out on the interior to include new spray foam insulation, creating a much more energy efficient envelope. Daylighting within the space helps to reduce energy costs for lighting, with the clerestory light wells designed to reduce solar heat gain and glare. The light wells also use tempered, insulated glazing which is thermally broken to minimize heat transfer in the winter. LED site

lighting helps to reduce energy use for outdoor illumination.

The Vernon Malone College and Career Academy, which opened at the start of the 2014-2015 school year, is already a success. The unique collaboration between Wake County, WCPSS, and Wake Tech has created an educational environment that will encourage more high school students to stay in school, graduate, and build valuable marketable skills. The dynamic transformation has brought new purpose to a “ghost” building, thereby saving resources and injecting activity and life into a quiet industrial area. The design provides a successful example of adaptive re-use which might encourage similar projects in the future, and has generated lessons learned which will benefit both the designers and other entities interested in reclaiming similar forgotten spaces for educational uses.

The vacant bottling plant gets a new lease on life, and the students gain access to new educational opportunities. Stagnant to active. Idle to innovative. Vacant to vibrant.

Everybody wins.



