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**Century-old steel mill re-envisioned as food innovation incubator**

**modernizes windows with EXTECH’s LIGHTWALL system**

Pittsburgh (Oct. 2021) – Factory, LLC has transformed an old steel mill in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, into a new business incubator for food and consumer-packaged goods. Providing natural light, while promoting a comfortable, creative and productive interior, EXTECH/Exterior Technologies, Inc.’s LIGHTWALL 3440® interlocking polycarbonate translucent wall system replaced the brick exterior’s broken and empty window openings.

To retrofit and improve the 40,000-square-foot industrial building, EXTECH worked closely with specialty glazing contractor, Hutt’s Glass Co. Inc., to fulfill the design developed by J.G. Petrucci Company and Cerminara Architect for the owner of Factory and of Columbia Associates. Construction was provided by Petrucci’s Iron Hill Construction Management company.

Formerly known as the Mill Depot, the original facility was built in the early 1900s for Bethlehem Steel as a shop to mill its tool and hand-hammered alloy steel. Nearly a century later, other metallurgical businesses made use of the space until 2014. Columbia Associates purchased the vacant and aging property in 2017.

According to Petrucci, the team’s vision “paid homage to the building’s industrial roots by replicating the industrial window style, and preserving one of the original cranes that was used by Bethlehem Steel. By keeping these features, the team retained the character of the old Bethlehem Steel building, while bringing new life into it with this exciting food-innovation use.”

To maximize access to natural light, Factory’s workspaces are positioned along the building’s perimeter. EXTECH’s team engineered and custom-fabricated the tongue-and-groove polycarbonate wall assembly as rectangular, fixed, punched and expansive strip window units. The seven longest horizontal stretches span more than 20 feet wide by 8 feet tall.

The openings on the southern elevation were specified with a translucent, opalescent appearance to softly diffuse the interior daylight and minimize glare. Transparent panels were preferred for the building’s three other sides. All of the polycarbonate panels have a UV-resistant coating on the exterior surface to manage unwanted solar heat gain and maintain a desirable, consistent interior temperature.

The units are framed in aluminum finished in a Statuary Bronze color baked enamel. The framing members’ interior and exterior metal surfaces are separated and insulated to improve thermal performance. The combined polycarbonate glazing and thermally broken framing also contribute to reducing the building’s demand on electrical and HVAC systems, optimizing energy efficiency and lowering associated utility costs.

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Contributing to the area’s entrepreneurial energy and vibrant community, Factory is in close proximity to college students and creatives with innovative ideas. Set in the Arts District, the building is three blocks from Lehigh University and near Moravian College and Northampton Community College.

Factory’s modern building opened in 2019 and its concept serves as a “scale-up” facility and investor for food, beverage, and pet brands located in Bethlehem. The inviting, collaborative space features a best-in-class commercial kitchen with live video capabilities and food safety areas, with refurbished shipping containers serving as unique office spaces.

It provides resources – including capital, team members, office space and industry connections – to start-up companies. Factory’s current investment portfolio includes Stuffed Puffs, the one-of-a-kind marshmallow filled with milk chocolate, and Honey Stinger, a sports nutrition brand offering chews, gels, hydration mixes, and other brand partners.

Factory’s transformative space was honored in 2019 by the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce with a Commercial Real Estate Development Adaptive Reuse Award. Bethlehem Chamber’s 2020 Chair, Kristian Schafer, also offered her support saying, “The Factory truly is a unique approach to building value and taking your business to the next level. … Take a walk around, and you’ll feel the entrepreneurial energy in the air, and know exactly why the Factory will be a community partner for many, many years to come!”

During a 2021 facility tour by Governor Tom Wolf noted, “Companies like Factory play a critical role in bolstering Pennsylvania’s workforce and economy. Their unique approach to supporting start-up companies serves as a model to investors and helps set new businesses up for long-term success. It also demonstrates the importance of investing in our commonwealth’s businesses and workers in a meaningful and robust way.”

Rich Thompson, Factory’s founder and managing partner, added, “This is a great environment with everything we were looking for: a thriving business community, lots of experienced professionals, top-tier universities who provide us with talented interns, and state and local leaders who were excited to support us. We’re looking forward to continuing to grow our roots here in the Lehigh Valley and to bringing more innovative start-ups and jobs to PA.”

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**Factory, LLC; 315 Columbia Street, Bethlehem, PA 18015; https://www.factory-llc.com**

* Building owner: Columbia Associates LLC; Bethlehem, Pennsylvania
* Developer, design-builder: J.G. Petrucci Company, Inc.; https://www.jgpetrucci.com
* Architect: Cerminara Architect; Township, New Jersey; http://www.cerminaraarchitect.com
* General contractor: Iron Hill Construction Management; Bethlehem, Pennsylvania; https://www.ironhillcm.com
* Glazing contractor: Hutt’s Glass Co. Inc.; Bechtelsville, Pennsylvania; http://www.huttsglass.com
* Polycarbonate wall system – manufacturer: EXTECH/Exterior Technologies, Inc.; Pittsburgh; https://extechinc.com
* Photos: Factory, LLC
* Video: https://www.factory-llc.com/capabilities

*EXTECH/Exterior Technologies, Inc.’s mission is to improve lives through innovation in daylighting systems, natural ventilation and other unique building envelope systems. Redefining the intersection between the natural and built environments, EXTECH manufactures and designs wall, window, skylight, canopy and custom façade systems.*

*Learn more by calling 800-500-8083, emailing* *info@extechinc.com* *or visiting* [*https://extechinc.com*](https://extechinc.com/)*.*

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