

Upstate Forever slips into comfortable new digs

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Upstate Forever's new headquarters on Pettigru Street just goes to show that "green" isn't always about what is new and trendy; sometimes it has a lot to do with what is old and worth preserving.

Brett Southerland, standing outside the bright yellow house that now is home to the one of the Upstate's premiere conservation groups, seemed pleased with the outcome. His company, Southerland Construction, did a great deal of the structural work in the building.

"If Upstate Forever hadn't come along with this project this fine old home probably would have been torn down by the city," he said. "There were structural problems; the building had stood vacant for more than 20 years. It was a mess."

That's an assessment shared by Hal Hall of Abtec of South Carolina. His company handled abatement of the building's significant problems with asbestos and lead paint. "We had to set up a system with negative air pressure inside the house to handle the asbestos problem," he said. "Once that was done the removal and abatement was fairly straight forward."

At the unveiling of the project last year the walls had been stripped to the beams by Abtec workers to remove the deadly material.

Those same bare boards are now cloaked in environmentally friendly materials - 507 Pettigru will be certified as both an EarthCraft structure and a LEED-certified building.

Originally built as a private residence in 1916, the 4,100-square-foot building will house Upstate Forever as it enters its second decade of service in preserving the region's natural heritage and promoting sustainable development practices.

Brad Wyche, Upstate Forever executive director, said much of the building's

original materials were recycled in the renovation.

Even the old storage building behind the house was taken apart and reassembled at a country residence as a chicken coop, he said.

David Anderssen, of Johnston Design Group, the building's architect said the end result was a structure that will be pleasant to work in and very easy on the environment. "Right down to these cabinet doors, which are made from recycled sunflower seeds (the husks), we've found ways to reuse and recycle materials.

That makes a tremendous difference in the building's overall footprint on the environment."

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WELL PLEASED: Brett Sutherland and Hal Hall, foreground, admire their handiwork at 507 Pettigru Street.



Photos by Charles Sowell/Staff

Wyche