

# Project Profile



## **Project**

Fulton Cotton Mill Lofts  
Atlanta, Georgia

## **Owner / Developer**

Aderhold Properties, Inc.  
Atlanta, Georgia

## **General Contractor**

Gay Residential, LLC  
Smyrna, Georgia

## **Roofing Contractor**

T.L. Gowin & Company, Inc.  
Cartersville, Georgia

## **Roofing System**

Adhered and mechanically-  
attached using 60 mil  
Sarnafil® G410 and S327  
EnergySmart Roof® membranes

## **Project Size**

150,000 square feet

## **Completed**

October 2008

## **Sika Sarnafil Roof Systems Withstand Tornado at Residential Complex**

With wind-gusts up to 135 miles-per-hour, the EF-2 tornado that raced through downtown Atlanta the night of March 14, 2008 was literally a force to be reckoned with. The tornado destroyed 20 homes in Atlanta's historic Cabbagetown neighborhood, and portions of the nearby Fulton Cotton Mill Lofts residential complex "collapsed in a pancake fashion," Atlanta Fire Chief Kelvin Cochran said in a news report. "It looked like a bomb went off," added a Cabbagetown resident.

"I was out-of-town when I heard about the tornado, and when I turned on the TV the first thing I saw was a reporter standing in front of one of our demolished buildings," said Polly Finch, Vice President of Aderhold Properties, Inc., of Atlanta, owners of the Fulton Cotton Mill Lofts.

The residential complex is made up of eight buildings, seven of which were occupied and all of which suffered some damage from the tornado. Worst hit were Building E, which had a corner of the building implode, and Building C, where two walls collapsed. "One of our owners was giving their kids a bath

and the next thing they knew their upstairs neighbor's ceiling was gone and had fallen in front of their window blocking all view of the outside," Finch said.

Miraculously, no one was killed at the residential complex, and the only resident injured was treated and released.

## **Holding On to a Good Thing**

Terry Gowin, president of the commercial roofing company T.L. Gowin & Company of Cartersville, GA contacted Polly Finch immediately upon hearing of the tornadoes. T.L. Gowin & Company had been working directly with Finch on roofing maintenance for the Cotton Mill Lofts and offered to arrange for roofing crews to be on site immediately.

Coming together on scene with T.L. Gowin & Company were general contractors Gay Residential of Smyrna, GA and North Ridge Restoration, LLC of Alpharetta, GA — all working together with police and fire departments to secure the area and make sure the residents were safe. "It was first determined which buildings the tenants would stay in, and then Gowin & Company crews began installing temporary roofs to

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prevent further water damage,” Terry Gowin said. Several times during those initial days, workers had to stop and take cover as tornado sirens went off. During the March 14-15 timeframe, more than 40 tornados touched down in the Atlanta area.

The work crews had a big task ahead of them. Portions of some of the roofs had been blown off, and some of the beams from Building E were blown through Building F “like arrows,” said Phil Rutledge, senior project manager at Gay Residential.

One of the things Rick Yarbrough, project manager at T.L. Gowin, noticed when looking at the debris and destruction was how well the Sika Sarnafil roofs, installed on Buildings D, E, F, and H, performed. “If the decking was still in place, then the Sika Sarnafil membrane was still intact as well,” he explained. Even on the worst hit Buildings E and H, substantial portions of the Sika Sarnafil roofing systems remained in place. The other roofs on the complex — which included a shingled roof, and ballasted and fully adhered EPDM systems — did not fare nearly as well, and most suffered wind-uplift damage and were blown off their decks.

“I wasn’t surprised that the Sika Sarnafil roofs performed so well, because you know with Sika Sarnafil you are getting a premium product with a history of strong performance,” Yarbrough said. Terry Gowin added “The Sika Sarnafil regional representative, Michael Rauth, was a tremendous help, as always. A great product and terrific support have made Sika Sarnafil the best solution for many of our roofing and waterproofing projects.”

Those were a few of the reasons why Gowin recommended that Sika Sarnafil roofing systems be used to replace all of the complex’s roofs. (The intact Sika Sarnafil roofs had suffered damage from flying debris and/or there was concern about the structural integrity of the substrate after the tornado, which is why the roofs had to be replaced as well.)

Finch indicated there was no hesitation in going with T. L. Gowin’s recommendation. “We’ve been working with T.L. Gowin for more than five years and I trust their workmanship and opinions,” Finch explained.



Stark evidence of the destruction tornados caused at the Fulton Cotton Mill Lofts in Atlanta in March, 2008. Roofing contractor T.L. Gowin installed new roofs on eight buildings within the complex totaling some 150,000 square feet.

“Plus the Sika Sarnafil roofing systems seem really, really strong compared to other roofing systems and are able to withstand more.”

#### **A Complicated but Coordinated Effort**

Many different trades had to work on the buildings before they could be habitable again, which required a tremendous amount of coordination. “We had an army of people out there from every trade that you can think of, so we had meetings at least once a day at the beginning,” Yarbrough stated. The general contractor had to coordinate the efforts of these many different tradesmen in conjunction with a major roofing project. “T.L. Gowin did a very good job and we worked well together,” said Rutledge.

#### **Recycling Older Roofing Membrane**

T.L. Gowin prepared the Sika Sarnafil roofing membrane for recycling as it was removed, which involved cutting the old membrane into specific widths and placing it in cardboard boxes for shipment. The material was then sent for processing in preparation for recycling by Sika Sarnafil into new roofing membrane products. “If you have the opportunity to recycle then you should do it, so we were happy to work with Sika Sarnafil on this,” Yarbrough said. “They were very good about getting the recycling bins and pallets to us in a timely matter. They have always been there when we needed them.”

Finch added, “The people I’ve met from Sika Sarnafil are super people. They seem genuinely concerned with making sure we are happy with their product and their service and that they are doing a good job.”

#### **Coming Back Bigger and Stronger**

It was the concern and care shown by all parties involved that made a disastrous event a “blessing” in some respects, Finch said. “This was an amazing event, and we learned a lot from it,” she explained. “Everyone did a phenomenal job of getting these buildings back to normal in less than a year, which is unbelievable when you consider all the work they had to do with roofing and decking, air-conditioning, construction, and such.”

“I’ve worked with Polly Finch and Tom Aderhold for several years,” Gowin stated, “and I can’t say enough about how great they are to work with.”

“There was a fabulous effort between all parties and trades,” Yarbrough said. “We’re all taken aback with how smoothly this has gone.”

Finch agreed. “The reason things went so smoothly is because everyone worked as a team,” she explained. “The tornado pulled us all closer and made us a huge family, I would rather this hadn’t happened to us, but we’re going to come back better and stronger because of it.”

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