

The Turning Point

How the SPS Savings BluePrint helped Mills Pond transform a failing building envelope into a fresh start



SPS
Savings BluePrint

It was no secret that the buildings at Mills Pond were in rough shape. The original cedar clapboard siding at the Bloomfield, Conn., townhome community was failing. Windows needed to be replaced. Decks were deteriorating. And the roofs, replaced just eight years earlier on all 26 buildings, were leaking.

“Everyone was frustrated,” says former board member Vonnell Stahl. “The siding was falling apart, despite all the money we’d spent on painting and repairs. When the wind blew, my curtains moved, even when the window was closed.”

**Mills Pond
Bloomfield, Conn.
2016**

- SPS Savings BluePrint
- SPS30® Building Envelope Replacement
- SPS30 Enhanced Manufacturer Warranties
- SPS30 Assurance 30-Year Workmanship Warranty

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The community’s aging building envelope was also taking a toll on property values and curb appeal. “We felt stuck,” says Stahl. “We needed to do something to turn things around, but we couldn’t agree on how to do it. We certainly didn’t believe we could afford a lasting solution. But that was before we started working with Scherneck Property Services.”



A Better Way to Better Decisions

“Mills Pond was in a tough spot,” says SPS Vice President Thomas Daniel. “Figuring out how to approach these problems can be overwhelming for a community. There’s a lot at stake. Emotions can run high. And the board never really knows if they’re making the right decisions. But there is a better way. We call it the SPS Savings BluePrint.”

The SPS Savings BluePrint is a collaborative, fact-based approach to building envelope management that makes it easy for a board to understand their options and make the right long-term decisions for their community.

The Savings BluePrint process is completely transparent, says Daniel. “We start by gathering facts about the condition of the property and the financial circumstances of the community.”

At Mills Pond, SPS conducted an invasive investigation of the building envelope. Findings from the investigation were presented to homeowners at a community-wide meeting. The results, says Stahl, were shocking.

Confronting the Facts

Windows and doors, many of which had significant sill and framing rot, needed to be replaced. The community’s decks and railings were also beyond repair. “We were not aware of how pervasive the damage was,” says Stahl. “But that was nothing compared to what we learned about our siding and roofs.”

SPS’s investigation found that the original siding at Mills Pond was not installed using traditional building materials and methods. “There was no house wrap under our siding,” says Stahl. “There wasn’t even plywood sheathing. Instead, there were just Styrofoam blocks. That’s it. The clapboards were nailed directly into the Styrofoam. I was aghast.”

The complete lack of house wrap and sheathing did not surprise SPS’s Daniel, who has replaced his share of failed building envelope systems over the years. Still, he says, “the exterior walls were bad. They had to install chicken wire on some buildings to keep woodpeckers and other birds from nesting in the walls.”

There was no doubt the siding had to be replaced, says Daniel. “But no one expected to find that their eight-year old roofs were not tied into the sidewalls. That was a major point of water penetration,” he says. “There was no flashing to keep water out. The shingles were in good shape, but the roofing system was never integrated into the siding system.”

SPS’s findings were hard to take, says Stahl. “But you have to confront the facts. It’s the only way to move past fear and start focusing on solutions.”

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Choosing the Right Solution

Next, SPS and Mills Pond board members worked together to determine specifications and costs. Based on SPS's physical inspection and a detailed analysis of the community's finances, the board considered three options.

The first option was simply to keep doing what we were doing, says Stahl. "But that was a non-starter because what we were doing wasn't working. All we'd end up doing is wasting millions more on patches and sunk maintenance costs until we could afford to replace building components on a piecemeal basis," she says. "Meanwhile property values continue to degrade and no one is really happy."

The second option was to replace the siding and windows, integrate the existing roofs, and try to maintain the decks with spot repairs.

The third option was to do a complete building envelope makeover using long-life, low maintenance materials: new vinyl siding and PVC trim, new energy-efficient windows and doors, new composite decks and railings, and new roofs — all tied together in a fully-integrated building envelope system.

"We worked a long time with SPS to compare the costs and specifications," says Stahl. "Thomas showed us several SPS projects in different stages of completion, including one where SPS was tying existing roofs into new siding. That's when it became clear that keeping our existing roofs would be far more work and expensive than we thought. And what's the point if you have to replace the roofs again in 10 years?"

When we took a long, hard look at our options, says Stahl, it was clear that the highest-quality and longest-lasting solution was complete building envelope replacement.

What is the SPS Savings Blueprint?

The SPS Savings Blueprint is a road map for managing your building envelope plan that makes it easy for your board to make the correct maintenance, repair, and replacement decisions today and every day going forward. Your Savings Blueprint is practical, comprehensive, and completely transparent. And it's only available from SPS.

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Making the Numbers Work

The initial estimates for Mills Pond's building envelope replacement project was north of \$8 million.

The cost was staggering, says Stahl. "The idea of financing that amount seemed impossible. Our property manager at the time said that no bank would ever lend us that kind of money, and certainly not for more than a 20 year term."

These kind of large-scale projects come with large-scale budgets, says SPS Vice President Daniel. "That's why we spend so much time working with clients to work through specifications and pricing. The goal of the Savings Blueprint is help the board identify their options and a solution which is actionable. The numbers have to make sense for the homeowners."

"We went through the numbers over and over again," says Stahl. "We looked at materials and where we could reduce costs. Working together, we trimmed the estimated budget down to about \$7 million."

SPS also helped Mills Pond solve their financing challenge. "That was huge," says board Treasurer Gywnn Wissuchek. "Thomas Daniel introduced

us to a banker who worked with us to provide 30-year financing. Now instead of wasting money on maintenance that gets us nowhere, we're able to start over with brand new homes."

Moving Forward with Confidence

One of the most important aspects of the SPS Savings Blueprint is that the process assures the board's independence.

"We collaborate with board members to help them make informed decisions," says Daniel. "We help them understand their options and develop specifications and pricing together. But the board always has complete autonomy. They choose their own solution. They make the final decisions about whether to go ahead with a project, and whether or not to hire SPS to perform the work."

These are big decisions and big numbers, says Daniel. "That's why we encourage Savings Blueprint clients to hire a qualified third-party to validate project scope, specifications, and pricing."

At Mills Pond, the board hired Gorman Richardson Lewis Architects (GRLA) to conduct a peer review of the project. "We wanted an independent assessment before moving forward," says Wissuchek. "And GRLA looked at everything."

"Our responsibility is to the owners," says Neil Rouleau, director of GRLA's Building Envelope Sciences group, which specializes in specifying, designing, and managing large-scale building envelope projects. "The client pays us directly. We report to the board, not SPS."

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GRLA's review verified that the board's Savings BluePrint project scope was necessary, the specifications were valid, and the pricing was fair and consistent with market standards.

"SPS's Savings BluePrint is a smart and useful tool for condominium communities," says Rouleau. "It's a comprehensive process that guides owners through all aspects of a building envelope problem towards a practical and actionable solution. In my experience, it can also produce real long-term savings."

The way Gwynn Wissuchek sees it, working through the SPS Savings BluePrint process made it easy for

the board to do its job with confidence. "We have a fiduciary responsibility to make the right decisions," she says. "Now we have a project that is going to give

us a brand new building envelope and a financing solution that makes it possible. And I don't know that we would have ever gotten here without SPS."

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What is SPS30?

SPS30 is a new building envelope for your home that is custom-designed and built to provide at least 30 years of worry-free, low-maintenance condominium living. SPS30 means a fresh start for homeowners — and your community. It's a new standard for quality, longevity and peace of mind. And it's only available from SPS.

SPS30[®] Enhanced Manufacturer Warranties

SPS30 building envelope projects deliver enduring value, longevity, and peace of mind. SPS30 projects use only the highest quality materials, backed by manufacturer warranties only available to SPS30 clients.

SPS is proud to collaborate with



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