

The Hour

Preserving a part of Norwalk's industrial history with Perkin Elmer Legacy Room

NORWALK

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Even as they modernize and refurbish old buildings and properties, the developers of iPark recognize the importance of history.

National Resources, a Greenwich-based real estate development firm, has converted the former Perkin-Elmer building on Main Avenue from an old office and manufacturing center to an up-to-date, energy-efficient mixed use facility. Although Perkin-Elmer is gone from the building, the company will never be forgotten.

National Resources on Friday morning dedicated a large lobby area at iPark as the "Perkin-Elmer Legacy Room." About 100 people -- mostly former Perkin-Elmer employees -- gathered at a ceremony to officially dedicate the room. The room, which is open to the public, serves as a type of museum dedicated to Perkin-Elmer, with a timeline of the company's history and several floor-to-ceiling displays on the walls.

"When we walked through the vacant hallways we could always feel the magic," Joe Cotter, president of National Resources, said. "What Perkin-Elmer accomplished here was truly special."

National Resources did similar projects with other properties it developed, such as the former Otis Elevator property in Westchester County, N.Y. iPark in Norwalk was especially meaningful to Cotter, he said, because his mother worked at Perkin-Elmer for 20 years.

"When we take over a property like this we recognize there is a lot of history," Cotter said. "When you have a company with such a history like Perkin-Elmer, where a lot of world-class innovation occurred, we feel it's only right to recognize the company."

Many of the people who forged Perkin-Elmer's storied history were on hand for the ceremony, including Gaynor Kelley, the company's CEO from 1990 to 1995, and Rob Perkin, the son of company co-founder Richard Perkin.

"Charles Elmer and my father would be proud of this dedication," Rob Perkin said.

Kelley spoke to the former employees at the event and said: "The whole of the company was its people."

Several local politicians spoke at the event, including Norwalk Mayor Richard Moccia, Wilton First Selectman Bill Brennan, State Senator Bob Duff, and State Senator Toni Boucher.

Moccia recalled the days when he worked for Nash Engineering and played softball against the Perkin-Elmer team. He remembers it being a bitter, yet friendly, rivalry.

"We're here today to thank Perkin-Elmer and recognize so many former employees," Moccia said. "I hope we can have these reunions more often."

Bart Crisafi, who worked in the tax department for Perkin-Elmer for 24 years, recalled fond memories upon walking into the building for the first time since the company left it.

"It's nice to see these old faces," he said. "Perkin-Elmer employed a lot of people in Connecticut in its heyday, especially in Norwalk. I'd love to see my old office here."

Alex Nosevich, a technical support employee with Perkin-Elmer for 35 years, said Natural Resources "did an excellent job with the displays."

Nosevich is the president of the Perkin-Elmer RC Club, an organization for former Perkin-Elmer employees. The club, he said, holds lunches, bus trips, golf outings and other activities. (See www.rcnews.org for more information.)

Duff said he often comes across people who have worked at Perkin-Elmer for multiple decades.

"This was not just a job. It was a career and a way of life," he said. "So many people took pride in what they did."

Boucher said the museum can serve as a tool for teaching children about the rich history of innovation in the state.

Brennan recognized that Perkin-Elmer employees made "such a terrific contribution" to the area, nation and the world.

iPark is located on the Norwalk/Wilton line and is home to, among others, LA Fitness, Norwalk Hospital's Health and Wellness Center, Soundview Medical Associates, and Center for Advanced Pediatrics.

