

DURANGO POWER HOUSE

Durango, CO
Section 128 (a) State and Tribal Grant

Children's Museum Project Brings New Energy to an Historic Power Plant

ADDRESS: 1333 Camino del Rio, Durango, CO 81301
PROPERTY SIZE: Three acres
FORMER USE: Power plant
CURRENT USE: Future home of the Durango Discovery Museum and public recreational space

EPA GRANT RECIPIENT:	PROJECT PARTNERS:
The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CO DPHE) utilized \$45,000 in Section 128(a) State and Tribal Response Program Grant funds.	City of Durango, Durango Discovery Museum, CO DPHE



For additional data and geographic information for this and other Brownfields Grants, please visit EPA's:
Envirofacts - www.epa.gov/enviro/html/bms/bms_query.html
Enviomapper - www.epa.gov/enviro/bf

PROJECT BACKGROUND:

Located in Colorado's southwestern corner, the City of Durango became home to the world's first steam-powered, alternating current (AC) power plant in 1893. A critical part of Durango's early development, the plant was eventually incorporated into Western Colorado's power grid as the region's energy use expanded. The plant operated until the mid 1970s, when it ceased operations and was boarded up with much of its original equipment still in place. The 8,000-square-foot plant, which covers three acres on the banks of the Animas River, sat idle and dilapidated for more than 20 years. The City of Durango took ownership of the property, but reuse options were hindered by unknown levels of asbestos and other contaminants, including decades of pigeon waste buildup. While still in limbo, the Durango Power House was added to both state and federal Historic Place registries. Finally, in 2002, the Children's Museum of Durango contacted the city with an interest in restoring and relocating onto the historic site. An agreement was made in which the Museum would handle fundraising for necessary cleanup and redevelopment, while the city would provide administrative and technical assistance and transfer site ownership to the Museum upon the project's completion. To aid with assessments, the city requested the assistance of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Used approximately \$45,000 in 128(a) funds to perform assessments on the historic facility; findings from these and earlier assessments included asbestos, pigeon waste, mercury, and uranium mining waste (which had migrated from an adjacent site).
- Used nearly \$90,000 in state funding to remove asbestos, and more than 1,000 cubic yards of contaminated soil. An additional \$8,000 in Section 128(a) funding also contributed toward soil removal.
- Completed primary cleanup of the facility in September 2005.
- Project donations, which have reached \$2 million (of an estimated \$10 million needed) have come from private foundations and local and national businesses. BP America donated \$50,000 in solar equipment that will one day provide power to the restored facility.



The historic Durango Power House, during cleanup and restoration.

OUTCOME:

With an estimated completion date of 2011, this project will create an interactive science museum that highlights the facility's historic role in energy innovation. Visitors will experiment with the 19th-century sciences that gave rise to electrical power, learn about locally mined energy products, operate a hydrogen-powered race car, and explore energy-efficient building techniques. The restored facility, which will retain and display some of its original equipment, will eventually be used for science camps and after-school club meetings; it is already being rented out for tours and private events. The restored Power Plant is also in the application process for LEED certification, which will recognize how its reconstruction and operation meet high standards for energy efficiency and environmental stewardship. This project is part of a larger, riverfront restoration initiative that will produce new recreational space for both tourists and local residents—including a riverfront park, outdoor shops and exhibits, and walkways connecting the site to downtown Durango.