Taxidermy and Tax Savings — Nature Center *Goes Wild* for Templok® Ceilings

Nixon Park Nature Center Renovation

Location York, Pennsylvania

Project Partner McClure Company (Energy Service Company)

Products/ Services Ultima® Templok® Energy Saving Ceilings

Nixon Park Nature Center energy efficiency project includes Ultima Templok from Armstrong World Industries to help bring the facility into the 21st century.

Armstrong® World Industries

The Backstory

Originally built in 1978 and expanded with a main display room in 1992, the Nixon Park Nature Center's charm came from its resemblance to a classic York County barn. However, as the decades wore on, this "charm" presented steepening challenges for the exhibits and visitors, and it threatened to erode the Center's roots in ecology and resources preservation. For quite some time, the 20,000-square-foot Nixon Park Nature Center complex had been experiencing issues with temperature and humidity control. As climate change brought on hotter summers, bigger temperature swings, and unpredictable winters defined by mild days and severe cold snaps, it became even more difficult for the nature center to provide an environment that was comfortable and safe from top to bottom:

> Basement—consisting mainly of educational space and classrooms
>
> Main floor—exhibits ranging from taxidermy collections to live animals
>
> Upper floors/attic—office space and storage

In addition, aging HVAC systems layered on the challenges as well as inefficiency as equipment worked harder to try and keep spaces cooler during high-traffic, sun-laden afternoons and warmer during mornings following frigid overnights.

In Fall of 2025, work began to preserve the aging facility and bring it up to date for energy efficiency and indoor environmental quality (IEQ) goals. With more than 5,000 school-age visitors and camp participants visiting through summer camp season alone—plus an average of 25,000 visitors annually—the project demonstrated York County's commitment to ensuring the Nixon Park Nature Center remained an asset to the county, its residents, and the environment.

Innovations and Partnerships

For the Nixon Park Nature Center project, York County partnered with McClure Company, an energy services company (ESCO) that specializes in helping facilities assess and improve energy efficiency and reduce energy costs. From the start, the nature center's renovation was labeled as an energy efficiency project, making it ideal for Armstrong energy-saving ceilings. Based in phase change material (PCM) technology, these ceilings offered ways to passively improve thermal management and would work together with other renovation and process improvements—such as zone sensors and proactive temperature presets—to optimize HVAC efficiency and energy savings.

Armstrong worked first to ensure facility management for the nature center understood the value of the PCM ceilings' year-round thermal management and comfort, savings on energy use and costs, and § 48E Clean Electricity Investment Tax Credits (ITC). A 2025 study prepared by Ryan LLC, a global tax services firm, supports the view that Templok ceiling tiles may be a qualifying "thermal energy storage property" for purposes of the § 48E Clean Electricity Investment Tax Credit. The study evaluated Templok ceiling tiles and the associated suspension system, trim and labor, along with documents showing Templok ceiling tiles meet domestic content and Foreign Entity of Concern ("FEOC") requirements.

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"The 2022 Inflation Reduction Act included a new provision called "Elective-Pay" which has become a great equalizer for government and non-profit entities that also want to take advantage of IRC 48E Clean Energy Investment Tax Credits, ordinarily only made available to regular taxpayers such as corporations or owners/shareholders of flowthrough entities (e.g. s-corps and partnerships)," said Scott Stogsdill, Director of Federal Income Tax Consulting, Green Energy Incentives, Ryan LLC. "The new IRC 6417 Elective Payment allows for non-taxable entities to get a refund or rebate direct from the U.S. Treasury of the 40% to 50% ITC (up to 30% base ITC +10% domestic content +10% energy community) of eligible capital expenditure."

Don Marangoni, CEM, Account Executive at McClure Company said, "It's important to leverage available tax credits on projects to demonstrate to county leadership, and residents, a clear commitment to fiscal responsibility. The energy reduction helps to lower operating costs, allowing those savings to be reinvested back into the community."

Armstrong products for the Nixon Park Nature Center renovation included Ultima Templok Energy Saving Ceiling tiles and grid system. The ceiling tiles' lightweight, standard size and grid system will mean if replacement is necessary, it can be done easily by the facility's regular maintenance staff.

> "There wasn't a question we were going with Ultima Templok from Armstrong. As a nature center, we are eco-minded. As a nonprofit facility, we are stewards of tax-payer dollars. We took the opportunity of this renovation to introduce energy saving ceilings and benefit from the reduced energy consumption and an upfront tax credit."
>
> *James Runshaw, Director, Facilities Management, York County*

The Case for Energy Saving Ceilings

The renovated Nixon Park Nature Center opened in May 2026, with visitors, students, educators, and staff enjoying a higher-quality experience in the original museum space and the main display room. This was supported in large part by the PCM ceilings enabling more consistent, comfortable temperature in the complex's various zones, as well as stronger noise control afforded by Ultima Templok ceiling tiles Total Acoustics performance.

Maintaining a consistent environment is especially important for the taxidermy space, which contains more than 850 mounts valued at more than $1 million. The collection exhibits wildlife from Africa to the Arctic and everywhere in between, with many displays dating back to the 1960s adventures of a local York businessman—making it virtually impossible to replicate and making temperature control even more critical.

"You can absolutely notice the difference with the addition of the ceiling tiles, especially now that we've finetuned controls," said Runshaw. "It feels like a whole new building. We're consistently hitting our marks for where we want to be temperature-wise. And by saving energy and lowering operating costs we're mitigating the impact of unpredictable capacity charges on taxpayer contributions."

As the Nixon Park Nature Center goes through a full calendar year, it expects more of the same in terms of consistent thermal comfort and energy savings. Through several seasonal cycles, the PCM ceilings will "adjust" to, for example, accommodate the center's busy spring season when class trips cause indoor temperatures to fluctuate with occupancy levels and outdoor temperatures. In the heat of summer and tourist visits, A/C load shifting will have a similar impact. And year-round, the nature center will provide immersive experiences of local and "exotic" nature in an environment that keeps visitors comfortable and maintains the integrity of the flora, fauna, and dioramas.

"Anything we could do to lower energy use and cost was critical to this project," said Runshaw. "The energy saving ceilings are supporting our responsibility to using taxpayer dollars responsibly, our commitment to protecting the planet, and our mission to bring visitors closer to nature in a way they will always remember."

Armstrong® World Industries

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For more information about Templok® Energy Saving Ceilings, visit **armstrong.com/templok**

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