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The Water Tower Buford, GA

Water innovation hub chooses
MUNICIPEX reclaim pipe for ease
of use and durability.

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The Water Tower reimagines water research and innovation with MUNICIPEX reclaim pipe

Gwinnett County is forward-thinking when it comes to water utilities. Since the early 2000s, the county is home to the F. Wayne Hill Water Resources Center, one of the most advanced water reclamation facilities on the Eastern Seaboard. Gwinnett's water department is committed to their long-standing vision of producing the best quality water at the best value. With innovation at the heart of their goal, Gwinnett's Department of Water Resources conceptualized an educational campus dedicated to water research and technology development. Their concept came to life with the establishment of The Water Tower, a nonprofit global water innovation hub, which opened its doors in Buford, Georgia in the spring of 2022.

When construction planning began in late 2019, the project team enlisted the help of a local distributor for pipe material selection. Chad Wilbanks, director of training and technology at TWT, was specifically on the search for piping to transfer flows from the F. Wayne Hill Water Resources Center to the demonstration facility at TWT, where real flows are used for demonstration applications.

The distributor connected Wilbanks to REHAU Business Development Manager Bill King, whose interactive MUNICIPEX reclaim product demonstration made the difference. "Bill came out and did the demo, which was not what you typically see, where someone just stands at the front and does their thing, then asks if there are any questions," Wilbanks said. "Bill got us involved and made it a hands-on experience, which helped show us how durable and easy MUNICIPEX reclaim is."

The benefits of MUNICIPEX reclaim are two-fold for TWT: The pipe provides everyday functional use by transferring water from the reclamation facility to the demonstration facility and supports the education and development of water utilities.



For TWT, having a product installed in the building that could also be used for trainings was important. "MUNICIPEX reclaim was something durable we could use in the building and something we could use for training in classes," Wilbanks explained. "We will train folks how to connect and fit the pipe together and hook up water lines. Using the pipe in demonstrations and also in the building itself ties everything together."

Save on materials and stay on schedule

With more than 20 years of experience in the water industry, Wilbanks is familiar with various municipal piping materials such as PVC, HDPE, copper and now PEXa. The material advantages of MUNICIPEX reclaim over piping alternatives were apparent from the start, offering flexibility without compromising strength.

"The durability and ease of use of MUNICIPEX reclaim were the biggest selling points for me," said Wilbanks. "If you bend copper or PVC a certain way, it won't go back. This is not the case with MUNICIPEX, because you can bend the pipe in different ways and still bend it back, if needed. The pipe maintains its integrity, and you know you've installed durable pipe."

The flexibility of MUNICIPEX reclaim supports a quick and easy installation. The pipe can bend five times its outside diameter and is up to 70% lighter than copper, making it easy to carry and uncoil.

Additionally, MUNICIPEX does not require any specialized tools; standard pipe wrenches are used to make compression-joint connections, leading to material and labor savings.

MUNICIPEX reclaim lived up to its installation-friendly properties throughout the construction process at TWT. "Depending on the size of PVC pipe, you may need a battery-powered or electric tool to cut it. With copper, you need to solder it, which is a whole other skillset someone needs to have," he explained. "MUNICIPEX reclaim pipe is simple: You use a hand cutter, slide the pipe into the fitting and you're done. You don't need to worry about glue and soldering – you set it and forget it. The ease of access to make terminations without having to wait for set time with glue or a qualified person for soldering makes MUNICIPEX beneficial versus other products."

Durable, easy-to-use MUNICIPEX reclaim allowed TWT to save on materials and stay ahead of their project schedule. "When we decided to go with REHAU, they had rolls delivered to us in perfect order before we were even ready," Wilbanks said. "The time frame and delivery kept us ahead of schedule."

The project required two 500 ft (152 m) coils of 1 1/2 in. pipe, one 300 (91 m) ft coil of 1 1/2 in. pipe and two 100 ft (30 m) coils of 2 in. pipe.

Wilbanks appreciates the REHAU team for their steadfast support throughout the construction process. "Working with REHAU has been really good. Every communication has been promptly answered, and our order and deliveries were smooth," he said. "Everything leading up to using the product and turning on the flows has exceeded expectations in terms of delivery and installation."



Looking to the future with reclaim pipe

TWT turned on the flows for MUNICIPEX reclaim in a phased process. The flows for the main building began operating in April 2022, while the flows for the utility corridor were turned on a few months later as construction wrapped up.

"MUNICIPEX reclaim has definitely lived up to its expectations so far," said Wilbanks. "There was another part of the project that used fused HDPE for large diameter pipe and from the beginning there were complications with the building pressure, but MUNICIPEX has had no issues."

MUNICIPEX reclaim pipe will be featured in 2023 trainings at TWT, with a little help from King. Wilbanks and King will coordinate classes in conjunction with meter training as the educational campus continues to build its meter installation technician program. "MUNICIPEX can be beneficial for meter installation companies because it's durable and easy to use in comparison to copper and other piping materials," said Wilbanks. "I'll get some extra reclaim pipe for demonstration purposes, so meter installation tech students can bend and cut the pipe to see the benefits of MUNICIPEX firsthand."



About The Water Tower

The Water Tower is a water innovation hub dedicated to serving water and wastewater utilities in Gwinnett County, the southeast and beyond. The facility reimagines the future of the water industry within public and private sectors through programming in applied research, technology innovation, workforce development and industry engagement. The campus offers several amenities such as technology demonstration areas, research labs and training rooms to upskill the water workforce and encourage the implementation of innovative water technologies. TWT offers an online event calendar where visitors can sign up for public tours and water professionals can register for educational trainings, networking sessions and other industry events.

Project: The Water Tower, Buford, GA
Construction type: Educational facility, completed in 2022
Project scope: 1,500 ft (457 m) of pipe
Architect: Gresham Smith
General contractor: Reeves Young
REHAU systems used: MUNICIPEX® reclaim pipe
Finished photography: Chad Baumer Photography

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