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## Local couple restores piece of Boone's history

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Brian and Mira Williams are the owners of the newly renovated Blue Ridge Tourist Court.

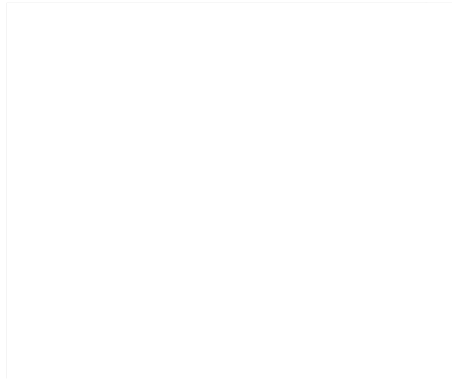
Photo by Moss Brennan

**BOONE** — A piece of Boone history was restored by a local couple as they reopened the Blue Ridge Tourist Court after years of it lying unused on Old East King Street.

Mira and Brian Williams have always loved architectural history. They were initially looking to move an old late 1890s era house that was on the hospital property, but there were too many obstacles to move it.

When the Blue Ridge Tourist Court building — which was rundown and in need of repair — came up for sale, Mira said they were afraid it would get torn down and used for storage.

“This is the oldest remaining roadside motel in Boone, and we didn’t want to see that happen,” Mira said. “So we jumped on it.”



Brian and Mira spent a year renovating the old roadside motel to return it to its former glory. The motel was built in 1950 by Estel Wagner, who also built a variety of other buildings in Boone in that era.

With that history in mind, Brian and Mira wanted to keep the heart of the 1950s motel alive, but they still had to go down to the studs during renovation.

“We took extensive pictures prior to deconstruction and tried to save as many materials as we could,” Brian said.

The front doors to each room are all original. The windows, except for the bathroom ones, are original outside of one they had to salvage. They also went back in most rooms with ceiling tiles that would typically be seen in that 1950s time period.

Each door is a different color, which matches the salvaged sinks in the bathrooms that to look close to the original.

“We tried to pay homage as best we could to that period,” Brian said.

Along with paying homage to that period, Brian and Mira are working to be as environmentally conscious as possible.





Each room is modeled to keep that 1950s look a live, but with modern day amenities.

Photo by Moss Brennan

Mira said they are partnering with ReSupply Boone to eliminate waste from single-use plastics in the toiletries. They also use Mananalú Water, which uses aluminum cans and is working to eliminate single use plastic water bottles. The company also removes a plastic water bottle or its equivalent in trash from the ocean with every purchase. Even the toilet paper gives back as they use Who Gives a Crap toilet paper, which gives 50% of profits to install toilets and improve sanitation in developing countries.

Brian and Mira are also trying to focus on featuring Boone businesses as much as possible. Mira said they worked with Hatchet Coffee to create custom coffee packets for guests in a machine that uses a reusable coffee filter basket.

They are featuring four local nonprofits, which they will donate to as well. Mira said they are hoping to draw some attention to these nonprofits to people outside of the community who may not know of them otherwise. The nonprofits are the Watauga Riverkeeper (Mountain True), the Western Youth Network, the Health and Hunger Coalition, and the Mediation and Restorative Justice Center.

‘We’re really excited to bring this back to Boone,’ Mira said. “When we got it, it was in such disrepair. Even now looking back at the pictures, it’s hard to even see what we imagined because it was so bad. It’s really fulfilling and heartwarming to see something that was a family business 70 years ago come back to life and continue to be a family business and something that can continue to thrive in Boone in the modern day.”

Brian said they hosted two of the children of the original owners to tour the renovating building. He said they were thrilled at some of the original details that were kept.

Eric Plaag, a consultant for the project through his firm Carolina Historical Consulting, LLC, said the rehabilitation of the Blue Ridge Tourist Court marks the “successful preservation of the last of Boone’s several post-World War II tourist courts and roadside motels.”

“Brian and Mira’s creativity and commitment to doing the rehabilitation in an historically sensitive and thoughtful way demonstrate that redevelopment does not have to come at the expense of our local history,” Plaag said. “Brian and Mira have leveraged the historic rehabilitation tax credit process to create a sympathetic, adaptive reuse of the property that is not only economically viable but also serves to re-energize long-neglected and underutilized commercial property in Boone. Their approach also celebrates a vital component of Boone’s mid-century history that shaped what our community is today. I hope that other developers will give greater consideration to this strategy on future redevelopment projects.”

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A history on the Blue Ridge Tourist Court can be found at [tinyurl.com/2dej4umc](https://tinyurl.com/2dej4umc).

More information on the motel can be found at [www.facebook.com/blueridgetouristcourt](https://www.facebook.com/blueridgetouristcourt).