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Susannah Woodman, and her fiance, Anthony Allen, of Saco, look at the view from a model apartment during an open house at The Mill at Saco Falls in Biddeford Friday afternoon.

Potential tenants inspect mill units

By LIZ GOTTHELF
Staff Writer

BIDDEFORD — A former textile mill will be home to 66 apartments by this fall.

The Mill at Saco Falls, next to the Saco River at 100 Saco Falls Way, has been redeveloped by Maine Workforce Housing. The building is part of the Riverdam Mill Complex.

Dirigo Management, which is managing the building, held an open house on Friday which was attended by many interested potential tenants.

Development of the building is not yet complete, and only a couple of model apartments were open. Construction on the redevelopment project began in December, 2009, and the building is expected to be ready in mid-November, said Nathan

Szanton, managing partner of Maine Workforce Housing.

The total cost for the project is projected to be about \$14.6 million.

The developers were assisted by grants from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and Maine State Housing Authority, as well as low-income tax credits and federal and state historic preservation tax credits, said Szanton.

The building has had a complete rehabilitation, with 445 windows replaced and all the brickwork repointed. Because of the size of the building, four masonry companies had to be hired to complete the repoint-

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ing, said Szanton.

The building meets green building standards, and has solar-heated hot water, is well-insulated and apartments have energy star appliances, he said.

The building will contain twenty six income-restricted housing units and 40 market-value apartments. The income-restricted housing units are part of a requirement to receive low-income housing tax credits, through a joint state and federal program, said Szanton.

To be eligible for the affordable housing units, renters' income cannot exceed the area's median income. A single person could not make more than about \$23,000.

Apartments vary in size from 89 square feet to 1,547 square feet. The 26 one- and two-bedroom market value apartments range in price from \$770 to \$985 a month. The 40 income-restricted 1, 2 and 3 bedroom housing units range in price from \$558 to \$895.

All of the market value apartments have river views, as do some of the affordable apartments.

Rent includes heat, hot water, wireless Internet service and a parking space. Additional parking spaces are available.

Amenities include a fitness center, theater room, on-site laundry, bike storage and kayak storage.

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Justin Trudeau, of Biddeford, peers into a closet in the bedroom of a model apartment at an open house at The Mill at Saco Falls in Biddeford Friday afternoon. Looking on are his girlfriend's sister, Zoe Laroche, and his daughter, Beth Laroche.

The building will be along the pathway of the proposed RiverWalk, a public pedestrian path planned alongside the river.

Gary and Judy Clark of Fryeburg, were at the open house Friday. They said they had recently sold their home and were looking to downsize. They said they had been looking for apartments for two years, and they were putting a deposit down on an apartment in the building that day.

"When the doors open, we'll

be here," said Judy.

They said there were a lot of little details they liked, such as a shelf in the closet and ceiling fans.

"We are very impressed with it, honestly. They do a nice job," said Gary.

Anthony Allen, and his fiancé Susannah Woodman, of Saco, were looking at one of the model units Friday. They said they liked the apartment, pointing out the spaciousness of the apartment and the view.

"It's nice to see them reuse

this building," said Allen.

Many people in the area worked in the former textile mill, or had relatives who worked in the mill, said Szanton. Being able to create apartments and make the building usable is a way to preserve history, he said.

"This is a big part of the collective memory of the city of Biddeford and the people who live around here," he said.

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