

# Developer plans apartment complex in Bates Mill No. 2

Parking and Wi-Fi will be among the amenities, and 34 of the 52 units will be for low-income renters.

By LINDSAY TICE  
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**LEWISTON** — A developer has plans to turn part of Bates Mill No. 2 into an apartment complex complete with 52 units, Wi-Fi, a fitness room, a media room, heated storage and a common area with computers.

Eighteen of the apartments will be one-bedroom units rented at market rates, or about \$640 a month including heat, hot water and a parking spot. The remaining 34 apartments will be one-, two- and three-bedroom units reserved for low-income renters.

The developer, Portland-based Maine Workforce Housing, is working to secure financing. The company hopes to start construction next summer and open in early 2012. It is calling the project The Lofts at Bates Mill.

This will be the first residential project for any mill in Lewiston.

"I think it has the potential to really have a strong positive impact on the downtown, to bring more people downtown," said housing developer Nathan Szanton.

"Living close to the shops and restaurants and public amenities, banks and the post office and library, all the things that the downtown has to offer, will help drive the redevelopment and spur the continued redevelopment of the Bates Mill complex," he said. "And, hopefully, other mills in Lewiston as well. We hope this could be a model that others could follow to bring housing to the mills."

Bates Mill No. 2 is between the buildings that house TD Bank and DaVinci's Eatery. Maine Workforce Housing said it plans to buy 40 percent of Bates Mill No. 2 from Tom Platz and his Bates Mill LLC.

The apartment complex will occupy the back half of the building, with apartments overlooking the courtyard fountain. The apartments will also feature 12½-foot ceilings, exposed timber framing and large windows.

"The units are going to be fabulous. I'm really excited about the units," Szanton said. "They are going to have a lot of character."

The complex will offer various amenities, including wireless Internet access, a media screening room free for tenants' use, a laundry room, a fitness area, heated self-storage and a community room with computers. Parking will be offered at a nearby parking garage as part of the rent.

Maine Workforce Housing is working on a similar project in Biddeford, where it's converting a 165-year-old mill building into The Mill at Saco Falls, a 66-unit apartment complex with a solar-powered hot water system, indoor bike storage, outdoor kayak storage and a playground.

"We wanted to find another mill building we could do the same thing to — to kind of breathe new life into a building that had been underutilized and sitting empty," Szanton said. Lincoln Jeffers, who heads economic development for the city, said he was delighted that Szanton wanted to do a project in Lewiston. He believes it will help the area's revitalization efforts.

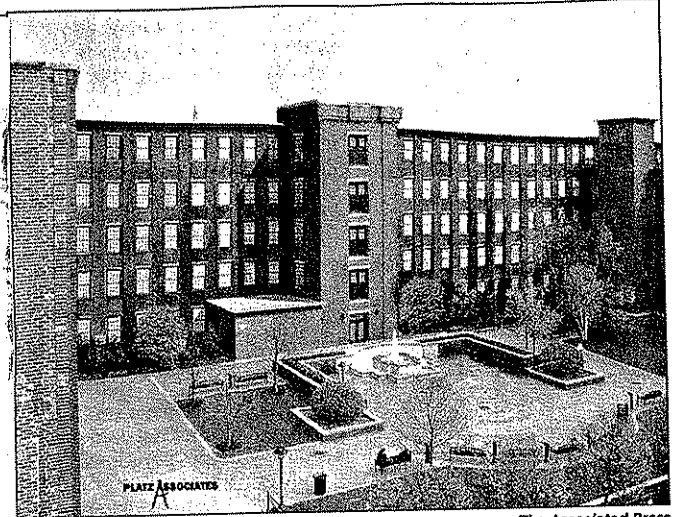
"The one piece of the puzzle that's been missing is having more folks living downtown," Jeffers said. "Nationally, Bates Mill is pretty unique without the housing. Most mill redevelopment projects throughout New England and in the South generally do have a housing component. So this is sort of coming back to that model."

Another group has proposed putting a casino in nearby Bates Mill No. 5. Szanton said he hasn't thought a lot about that proposal and any impact a casino might have on The Lofts at Bates Mill.

Szanton plans to send out invitations next week inviting neighbors to meet with Maine Workforce Housing to discuss his project. That meeting has been scheduled for 5:15 p.m. on June 16 at DaVinci's.

Maine Workforce Housing also will meet with Lewiston's Historic Preservation Review Board and the Planning Board this summer. Jeffers plans to present the project to the City Council and discuss any assistance the city may want to provide.

In order to qualify for the 34 apartments reserved for low-



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An artist's rendering provided by Maine Workforce Housing shows Bates Mill No. 2.

income families, renters must earn 50 percent or less than the median income for the area. For one person, that currently means an annual income of \$19,500 or less.

Those apartments will rent for

about \$483 a month for a one-bedroom, \$577 for a two-bedroom and \$665 for a three-bedroom, all including heat, hot water and a parking space. The developer is working to get Section 8 vouchers for 13 of the units.