

TOWN OF DUDLEY
MASSACHUSETTS
Public Information Office



Debbie LaPlaca
Public Information

71 West Main Street
Dudley, MA 01571
dlaplaca@dudleyma.gov

Office: 508-949-8030
Mobile: 508-847-2206

For Immediate Release

February 3, 2023

Stevens Linen Mill renovation nears groundbreaking

The grounds of the town's foremost historical landmark, Stevens Linen Mill, will host a bevy of activity this summer as renovation plans move from the drawing board to the jobsite.

It began in Aug. 2020 when Stevens Mill Owner LLC of Columbia, SC, bought the 6.95-acre property and its 267,000-square-foot mill at 8 Mill Street.

Project developer Camden Management Partners, who holds Stevens Mill Owner LLC, proposed a \$43 million plan to renovate the mill into 156 apartments, a public event space, a possible tap room, and a river walk along the adjoining French River.

The project received Dudley Planning Board approval last May and from the street view, all has been quiet since.

That's about to change.

Financial consultants to Camden, Andrew Weddle and Ben Johnson of Weddle Real Estate Investments, recently gave a construction update.

"The project isn't at risk. The delays up to this point are normal and customary as it related to making sure we have an accurate historical renovation," Weddle said. "We're almost complete with architectural plans and contractor pricing and will start developing in the summer."

The \$43 million endeavor, Weddle said, is now \$53 million.

"It's such a beautiful area and project," he added. "The significance of the mill is important."

The granite building was completed in 1864 and is widely recognized for its twin towers on the Dudley and Webster horizons.

It has earned a spot on the National Registry of Historic Places and as such, its renovation is overseen by the National Park Service and the state Historical Commission, to ensure the proper memorializing of history.

"There are very few of these left and the (National) Park Service wants it properly preserved," Weddle said, adding, "The town of Dudley has been an active participant in this project and has been delightful to work with."

In addition to the national and state historical tax credits Camden is to receive for the renovation, Dudley helped the project along by establishing the Webster-Dudley French River District and by approving a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) agreement with the developer.

While the mill owner will continue to pay the property taxes on the land's current value, the TIF forgives 100% of the additional taxes that would result from improving the property for the first seven years. In year eight, the developer will pay the base year property tax plus 10% of the improved value. The percentage increases until year 21 when the develop will pay 100% of the property value.

TOWN OF DUDLEY
MASSACHUSETTS
Public Information Office



Debbie LaPlaca
Public Information

71 West Main Street
Dudley, MA 01571
dlaplaca@dudleyma.gov

Office: 508-949-8030
Mobile: 508-847-2206

Town Administrator Jonathan Ruda said the benefits to Dudley will be much more than a gradual build-up to more property tax revenue.

“This large construction project has the added benefit of employing a local workforce, which will have a positive and welcomed impact on our local economy,” he said, adding, “It ties into the town’s efforts for improvements through thoughtful planning and smart development to expand business opportunities in town and ultimately, the sustainability of our local services.”

Camden principal John Gumpert who has referred to the building as a “gem” agreed that the renovation will spur growth in both Dudley and Webster.

Stevens Linen Assoc., Inc. dominated one of the region’s oldest industries from 1850 to 1950. Incorporated by Henry Hale Stevens in 1846, Stevens Linens began production in a mill built in 1812 at the corner of Ardlock <cq> Place and Mill Road.

The mill’s foremost structure, known as “The Main Mill,” was constructed of locally quarried granite block across the street between 1861 and 1864.

In time, its two seven-story towers stood over what became the largest of five mill villages in Dudley.

The now historic mill on the east side of town ceased operations in the mid-20th century and, with the exception of a short-lived flea market, has been vacant since.

Dudley voters made history in 2010 by establishing the town’s first historic district with the mill as its centerpiece.

Today, it is said to be the only remaining example of a linen manufacturing plant in the United States.

“When finished, this project will not only restore the crumbling remains of a significant historical landmark, it will also provide housing and outdoor recreation along the French River,” Ruda said.

With a groundbreaking this summer, the project is expected to complete the spring of 2025, with pre-leasing open the fall of 2024.

-30-