

## Secretary Ash Tours Greylock Works Project



Nate Sampson prepares the ceiling of the creamery in Greylock Works to be covered in concrete.

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By Tammy Daniels, iBerkshires Staff

NORTH ADAMS, Mass. — Workers were painstakingly pulling nails and screws out of the flooring in the massive 65,000 square foot Weave Shed on Thursday afternoon.

They already restored about half the flooring in this section of the old Greylock Mill but this final half still needed filling, sanding and sealing — removing over a century of grit and grime — before it would be ready for events planned later this summer.

“We methodically routed out every hole, we brought this floor back to life piece by piece,” said Greylock Works developer Salvatore Perry. “We cleaned very joint, every linear foot, we sanded it three times.”

It would have been a lot cheaper to just cover the old, thick plank flooring. But, Perry said, quoting a recent visitor to the work site, “you’ll never see a floor like this anywhere else in the world.”

Perry, who, with partner Karla Rothstein, purchased the mill nearly two years ago, is bringing new life to a once-bustling textile mill that at one point had at least 400 workers. The \$15 million

renovation project of the 240,000 square foot structure includes the event space and commercial kitchen in the Weave Shed’s east end, food production, restaurants, bar, and a hotel and 23 high-end condominiums to the west.

“I’ve seen the plans on paper but it just doesn’t jump out the way walking into this building and seeing the passion Sal and Karla have put into this building,” said Jay Ash, secretary of housing and economic development.

Ash was in North Adams at the invitation of Mayor Richard Alcombright and local legislators to see how MassWorks money is being invested in the mill. Both Alcombright and state Sen. Adam Hinds accompanied him on the tour, along with Chamber of Commerce coordinator Ricco Fruscio; Amy Shapiro, business assistance director Franklin County Community Development Corp; Michael Knapik, director of the Gov. Baker’s Springfield office; Hinds’ district aide, Alfred “A.J.” Enchill Jr., and several others.

Greylock Works received a \$2,176,341 MassWorks grant last fall to redo the entry and parking lots on the east and south side of the sprawling structure. Part of that grant was a 10-year easement for the city to allow use of the parking for the adjacent Alcombright Athletic Complex.

The parking lot will include period lighting, rain gardens, native plantings, custom curbing and period lighting. A pathway will connect to the ball fields. Perry anticipated the lot would be completed by the end of the year, capping a third year of progress on the building.

The last 18 months since buying the building, then the Cariddi Mill, it has had remediations, the Weave Shed was cleaned and painted, 25 new windows installed, new panels installed on the sawtooth roof, a new handicapped accessible ramp constructed, bathrooms installed, concrete flooring for the commercial kitchen laid and the dip-tank building demolished on the back side.

Perry estimated some 600 people had worked on the project so far. Next up will be replacing some 1,000 windows and preparing the buildings for further restoration.

Some 33 million people live within a day’s drive of Greylock Works, which Perry hopes will become a destination.

“We pinpoint how Greylock Mill is really at the epicenter of what many people are calling a cultural corridor between Williamstown and North Adams,” he said, pointing to other developments including the expansion of Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art and the Redwood Motel project.

The 79-room hotel on the west end will have room sizes ranging from the “very generous” to the very efficient.

“We’re looking to target the market from the Appalachian Trail hiker to parents visiting a college student in the area or just tourism coming through,” he said. “We want this to be inclusive and open to everyone.” He’ll be looking for a hotel operator to come onboard and having a model condominium built. He

estimated two years from getting an operator to having the hotel functional.

The focus, for now, is on getting the Weave Shed event-space ready and expanding into the “flat-roofed” area that will be used for artisanal food production.

“We’re really making a lot of networking connections that will help the businesses that are not only starting here but are already existing so that there can be a local synergy with the new energy we’re trying to tap into and bring to the area from New York City and Boston,” he said.

Perry and Rothstein operate Latent Productions in New York, which does design, construction management and development.

All those services can be brought to bear for tenants who will lease space in the building. Part of that is developing a network of partners and contacts that can help tenants in getting their products to market.

“We’re not just signing a lease,” he said. “It’s important that these tenants succeed. How are you getting your food product to a wholesale market?”



Interior structure of the boiler room that will be turned into a lounge.

Greylock Works is talking with people like Nick Martinelli of Marty’s Local who’s working the logistics of getting products from the Berkshires to retailers and long-established groups like Berkshire Grown and the Franklin County CDC.

The Weave Shed’s already hosted a New Year’s Eve party and stagings by the Williamstown Theatre Festival. It’s first private event, a wedding, has been booked for August and more events

to shine a light on the space’s potential will begin then.

“I think the events are going to be the driver for recruiting tenants,” Perry said.

Ash said it was important to see how the state’s dollars are having a local economic impact and to be able to report back to the Legislature and to those making the decisions on where they go.

So many communities across the state have old mills, many that have fallen into disrepair and are reminders of a past once filled with vitality, he said.

“But this is the total opposite. This is a big hulking testament to what used to happen in the old Industrial Revolution and how somebody with great vision supported by a community can come in and make this as vibrant a place,” Ash said. “When you think about all the thousands of people who worked here and you never see somebody bringing back a thousand jobs.

“But in this case, I would argue that what I’ve heard, what I’ve seen, what I feel, this building could be as important tomorrow as it was in its yesteryear. That’s very unusual.”