

Reclaiming the riverfront

Fox Cities work to redevelop vacant industrial sites



COURTESY OF EAGLE FLATS DEVELOPMENT

Old industrial sites are finding new life throughout the Fox Cities.

While construction crews turn the former Riverside Paper Mill site in Appleton into new multi-family housing options along the Fox River, the Glatfelter Paper site

Two multi-family residential housing complexes are taking shape along the Fox River in downtown Appleton. The site was formerly home to Riverside Paper Mill. Riverwalk Place, which will be owned by the Appleton Housing Authority, and The Landings, which will include apartments rented at the current market rate, are expected to open in the fall of 2012.

continues to flourish at the west end of Neenah's downtown.

And while there's a happy ending to these former paper mill sites,

Kimberly officials still await word on the future of another vacant mill facility, the New Page paper mill, which was purchased earlier this year.

Affinity building in Neenah

When Glatfelter closed its paper mill in downtown Neenah, no one was sure what would happen to the site. Now three years after the city of Neenah purchased the mill and invested \$9.4 million in it to prepare it for redevelopment, the site is home to the Plexus Corp.'s global headquarters and a small park. Two other projects are taking shape on the site.

This summer, Affinity Health System of Menasha announced plans to build a \$9 million clinic at 101 Main St., which is on the west end of Wisconsin Avenue. The two-story, 30,000-square-foot clinic will replace Affinity's Doty Island clinic on Lincoln Street.

Gary Kusnierz, Affinity's vice president of performance excellence, says the new location will better serve the health system's patients.

"The other clinic is an older building from the 1970s and is in need of work. We knew we had to do something with the site. The new clinic will provide better access to patients and it's a great opportunity to improve the care we deliver to patients," says Kusnierz. The new clinic is being designed to implement Affinity's Medical Home model, he adds.

"We're really looking forward to this project and turning this brownfield site into a modern health care facility," he says. The clinic design will mirror other recent Affinity projects, including clinics in Little Chute and the Town of Menasha.

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for Affinity Health System



Affinity Health System is building a new \$9 million clinic in downtown Neenah to replace an older facility on Doty Island. The 30,000-square-foot facility is one of two projects currently in the works for the former Glatfelter Mill site in Neenah. Plexus Corp., which opened its global headquarters at the site in 2010, is also planning to build a \$7 million corporate development center on W. Wisconsin Avenue.

Construction is set to begin this fall with the clinic opening at the start of 2013. The clinic will include family medicine, internal medicine, urgent care, audiology, cardiology, ear, nose and throat, primary care, rehabilitation services and a lab.

Crews will also be busy on the Glatfelter site next spring as Plexus begins work on a \$7 million, 20,000-square-foot development center in front of its global headquarters at Wisconsin Avenue's west end.

Construction was initially set to start over the summer, but Plexus decided to push plans back until next spring.

"(Affinity's) proposed development demonstrates the strong partnerships that Neenah has been able to foster with the private sector to the benefit

of the entire community," says Chris Haese, City of Neenah community development director.

"Additionally, the project continues to build momentum for more development on the balance of the Glatfelter site and will further stabilize downtown Neenah as a great place to live, work and play."

Eagle Flats under way in Appleton

A year from now, the former Riverside Paper Mill site along the Fox River in downtown Appleton will welcome the first residents to the Eagle Flats development. The first phase of the project, which is already under way, cleared out the former mill and includes the construction of two apartment complexes.

Riverwalk Place is a 70-unit building that will be used by the Appleton Housing Authority for affordable senior housing. It will replace the apartments currently at Washington Place on Washington Street in downtown Appleton across from the library. That building was cobbled together from two old hotels.

The Landings is the second apartment building going up on the site and will feature 54 apartments offered at current market rates. More than \$16 million in WHEDA tax [continued] »



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credits have been secured for the site.

Once the project's first phase is complete, planning will begin on the project's next phases, which include retail, office and more housing options. Trails will be a part of the project as well, connecting to the current Newberry Trail, which is across Lawe Street from the property.

"The big thing about this project is that we are creating more opportunities for the public to gain access to the riverfront and allowing the community to interact with the water," says Karen Harkness, director of community

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Construction is also happening at two other developments along the Fox River in Appleton, not far from Eagle Flats. At the end of June, the city

When Riverwalk Place is completed during the fall of 2012, the Appleton Housing Authority will move its residents from Washington Place in downtown Appleton to the new facility. The Eagle Flats development received more than \$16 million in WHEDA tax credits.

purchased the former Foremost Farms property at the end of John Street and crews have started demolition work on the site. Harkness says once the site is mitigated and a private dam in one of the building's basements is decommissioned, it will be ready for development. "We're excited to bring that site back to use and redevelop it," she says.

A previous plan on the table from

a local development group to put housing on the property is now off the table. Harkness is eager to see what plans developers may have for the site.

Just across the river from the Foremost Farms site, construction work finally began in early August on

the RiverHeath development. Plans now call for seven townhomes to be built on the site, which was once home to another paper mill.

"I'm excited to see construction finally get going on RiverHeath," Harkness says. While original site plans unveiled several years ago featured commercial space and condos (there was even talk of an outdoor ice rink), the project has been scaled back to a focus on single-family townhomes.

The site will also include trails, which will connect people with the river – something that Harkness is excited about. "Water is always a draw for people," she says, adding that the city continues to work with Canadian National Railroad to gain control of trestles over the river that can be converted into walking and biking paths.

Not too far from the river, two other projects are taking shape in Appleton's downtown. The city of Appleton is looking at redesigning Houdini Plaza to create more of a city center, while a non-profit organization is seeking funds to build an exhibition center on land across from the Radisson Paper Valley Hotel.

"It's all connected. If you look at the big picture, you'll see we're trying to

Focused on more growth

Over the summer, the Fox Cities Chamber of Commerce launched an in-depth study of the local economy to get a better handle on what it has to offer potential businesses and what can be done to get businesses to expand here.

The chamber is working with Garner Economics, an economic development and site strategy firm from Atlanta, on the study. Business owners have been involved with focus groups as consultants gather information about what's good – and not so good – about doing business in the Fox Cities.

Garner will then take that information and recommend short- and long-term strategies to sustain and grow a competitive advantage; business recruitment strategies; workforce development recommendations based on industry targets; and a list of qualified companies that may have an interest in the area, also referred to as Smart Leads by Applied Marketing.

"This is an exciting endeavor as we work to make our economy shine," Fox Cities Chamber CEO and President Shannon Meyer said when the project was unveiled in early summer during an event with Gov. Scott Walker at Miron Construction.

do a better job of connecting Houdini Plaza with Soldier's Square and that will lead to more downtown utilization. The addition of an exhibition center will not only bring more people downtown and boost the economy, it will help better connect the downtown with Jones Park, which is then connected to the many developments along the river," Harkness says. "All of the projects are just stepping stones to creating a more connected downtown and riverfront."

Also looming in the city's future is the possible redevelopment of Riverview Country Club, which overlooks the Fox River and is just a stone's throw away from downtown Appleton.

The golf course announced this summer it was being sold to B&H Properties for \$2.6 million and would close in October. B&H Properties plans to use the site for residential development although no firm plans have yet been sent to the city.

New life for New Page site?

Since New Page closed its Kimberly mill in 2008, putting hundreds of people out of work, village officials have anxiously awaited a buyer for the site along the Fox River. This spring, New Page announced it had sold the site to Montreal-based American Iron & Metal Co. (AIM).

The next question: What will happen to the site? Kimberly Village President Chuck Kuen is optimistic it will be reused as a papermaking facility.

"We understand that AIM is entertaining all inquiries for the facility, including its best use – papermaking," Kuen says. "As a community prideful to the point of having our school's mascot

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—**Chuck Kuen**, Kimberly village president, on hopes that the former New Page mill will once again produce paper after being purchased by American Iron & Metal Co.

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K-C plant reborn

The former Kimberly-Clark Corp. Lakeview diaper plant in the Town of Menasha, which closed in 2007, is now home to Prolamina Corp., a new packaging company.

Prolamina designs and manufactures packaging for the food, dairy and medical markets.

CLOSER LOOK

- » **City of Neenah:** www.ci.neenah.wi.us
- » **City of Appleton:** www.appleton.org
- » **Village of Kimberly:** www.vokimberly.org
- » **Fox Cities Chamber of Commerce:** www.foxcitieschamber.com
- » **Eagle Flats:** www.appletoneagleflats.com

The company initially plans to hire 70 employees, but that number may grow to 100.

Company executives liked the building's location — close to U.S. 41 and on a rail spur — as well as the quality of space available and the well-trained workforce.

In August, Prolamina acquired the assets of Packaging Dynamics Corp.'s extrusion laminating, 10-color printing and converting business in Kaukauna.

Prolamina says the purchase will support its focus on the food and medical packaging markets. The employees of Packaging Dynamics may be eligible for new jobs at the

Prolamina facility.

Prolamina hopes to begin operations this fall at the Town of Menasha site. Chairman Harold Bevis says the location was ideal for the new manufacturing facility. He and the company worked with the New North, Inc. and the Town of Menasha to get a deal in place to help convert 150,000 square feet of the former Lakeview plant into Prolamina's new manufacturing facility. Another 600,000 square feet of the former diaper plant remains available for other development. ①