

City mill will be converted into 'waterview' apartments

By Aaron Nicodemus

February 13, 2006 12:00 AM

Dartmouth businessman purchases site ,

NEW BEDFORD &

A Dartmouth business owner and landlord has purchased the former Cameo Curtains building in the city's North End for \$1.1 million, with plans to convert the mill into 100 market-rate apartments.

Alexander Naswari of North Dartmouth, owner of AA Jewelers in the Dartmouth Town Center, said he purchased the mill building because that area of the city, between Belleville Avenue and the Acushnet River, is turning toward residential uses. With the Whaler's Cove assisted living complex in the old Mars Bargainland mill, the new Riverside Park, and plans for a pedestrian walkway along the river, Mr. Naswari said the atmosphere "has encouraged me a lot" to pursue a residential development.

"I think this will be a real enhancement to the area," he said. He said he expects the apartments to be ready in a year to 18 months. He said he has hired an architecture firm to begin drawing up plans for the project.

The project will be called the Victoria Riverwalk Development, named after Mr. Naswari's daughter, Victoria. He bought the building on Feb. 2 from the Acushnet River Realty Corp., which was based in New York.

Turning former textile mills into housing has become a recognizable trend in New Bedford lately. Beyond completed projects like Whaler's Cove and the Taber Mills apartments, several other projects are being proposed or are in development. There is the 250-unit apartment project that has been approved for the former Wamsutta Mills building that faces Route 18; a 248-unit apartment and retail complex being proposed before the Planning Board next week for mills at 11 and 21 Cove Street in the South End; and 12 artist live/work spaces are being developed in the former Ropeswork Building on Sawyer Street. Several developers have been converting long-vacant downtown buildings into apartments and condominiums on the upper floors.

The apartments in the new Victoria Riverwalk Development will be rented at market rates, Mr. Naswari said. Apartments that face the water will have balconies.

Although Mr. Naswari owns several rental properties in New Bedford, he has never undertaken a renovation of this size.

The mill at 10 Manomet St. is known as the former Whitman Mill, a textile mill that was purchased by Stokely Brothers Co. in 1939, and converted into a canning company. Cameo Curtains, based in New York, bought the mill in 1950 and operated there until Jan. 1996, when it closed and laid off all of its 225 workers. The mill has been largely vacant since.

Contact Aaron Nicodemus at

Date of Publication on Page A05