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A wide variety of construction projects underway in the Lewiston-Auburn area

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Several diverse and interesting projects are blooming in the cities of Lewiston and Auburn, Maine, ranging from health care to culinary offerings.

Most recently, an entrepreneur with local roots announced he will open a microbrewery at the Bates Mill Complex in Lewiston, and will have capacity to fill 30 cans a minute.

But here's the twist (but not the twist-off): The Baxter Brewing Co., which will be run by 25-year-old Auburn native Luke Livingston and master brewer Michael LaCharite, will sell beer in cans, not bottles. The Baxter brewery will feature a 30-barrel brewhouse and a state-of-the-art canning line. Livingston was attracted to the mill in part because adaptive re-use of a former textile mill appealed to him.

When launched, the facility will be open daily for brewery tours, tastings and special events. Livingston intends to have a fully-stocked retail shop selling beer and promotional items featuring his logo of a Maine moose with wings - a nod to a native legend regarding a moose-like creature inhabiting Maine's Mount Katahdin in Baxter State Park. A ground-breaking ceremony is scheduled for late spring.

Speaking of adaptive reuse, local restaurateur Jules Patry, who manages Davinci's Eatery at the Bates Mill Complex, has purchased a long-dormant building on downtown Lisbon Street which he will renovate and convert to mixed use. The top floors of 84 Lisbon St. will be living space, and the bottom floor is intended to be a mix of office and retail space. Patry is taking a page from fellow restaurateur Eric Agren, who did the same kind of renovation with his wildly successful Fuel restaurant and upstairs condo.

Indeed, Agren opened his second restaurant in April across the street from Fuel. This one is a chic lunch boutique called MarchÃ© (French for "marketplace"). The menu includes gourmet sandwiches, daily specials, and stuffed crepes to die for.

A new community-based outpatient clinic for veterans is set to open in Lewiston in 2011. The clinic will be located at 15 Challenger Dr. off Alfred Plourde Parkway in Lewiston. In late January, Maine congressman Michael Michaud announced that federal funding had been approved to build the new Veterans Administration clinic in Lewiston.

The Lewiston-Auburn Economic Growth Council (LAEGC) was intimately involved in rallying support for the local clinic, and organized numerous meetings with local and VA officials. LAEGC and veteran organizations submitted letters of support requesting that VA officials locate a clinic in Androscoggin County rather than Cumberland County. LAEGC initially compiled a report with census data showing the large number of veterans residing in the greater Lewiston-Auburn area.

In the meantime, an interim facility will be established in Auburn to accommodate veterans over age 75 prior to the clinic's opening.

In another health care-related development, St. Mary's Health System opened its long-awaited out-patient clinic on Turner St. in Auburn in late winter. The building includes Auburn Medical Associates, an internal medicine practice focused on adult medical care; a radiology department; the Center for Diabetes and Endocrinology; employer occupational health programs, a sleep disorders center, and centers for both cardiopulmonary and physical rehabilitation.

After years of planning, Community Concepts Inc., a social services agency that promotes self-sufficiency within the people of the Maine communities of Androscoggin, Franklin and Oxford counties, is moving forward with its Lewiston Service Center. The facility will be located at the site of a former high school in the center of downtown. A ground breaking was scheduled for the end of April.

Work continues on TD Bank's state-of-the-art, 500-seat call center located at The Auburn Mall. The new facility will eventually employ up to 500 mostly full-time workers when running at full capacity. The 60,000 s/f, state-of-the-art facility will be LEED (Leadership in Energy and Efficient Design)-certified and include several environmentally-friendly features.

A large chunk of granite will serve as a showpiece and symbol of the bank's role as a solid, steadfast employer in the community.

According to PR Newswire, TD has a 10-year lease on the property, and the price tag for the project is estimated at \$16 million. The facility is expected to open by mid-2010 with about 200 employees, with the remaining positions to be filled through 2011.

"The center will provide customers with live service 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and will serve TD Bank's entire Maine-to-Florida footprint," according to a press release. The facility is slated to have state-of-the-art lighting and climate controls, use water-efficient irrigation and recycled wood, and offer employees bicycle storage.

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