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## **The Lockwood Mills Complex is a vital component of Central Maine's economic transformation**

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In March 2002, about one month after I became executive director of the Central Maine Growth Council, the Hathaway Shirt Company announced that it would be ceasing operations in Waterville, and eliminating more than 300 jobs in the region. By February 2003, the last employees of Hathaway were gone and by summer 2003 the facility was shuttered.

This closure followed a long list of downsizings and closings of the manufacturing sector in Central Maine. While most people in the area understood that our economy was certainly in transition, this was a blow to our region's economy and psyche. This transition seemed to be happening faster and more abrupt than we all thought.

The questions now became, "How do we move more quickly into the economy of the 21st century?" and "What do we do with that building and how can we utilize it as an asset?" It became apparent that the best way to find answers to these questions was to be proactive and reach out and involve the private sector. The city of Waterville owned the building and was not in a position with the capital, patience, and resources necessary to tackle such a large project.

In 2004, Paul Boghossian, a Rhode Island businessman/developer and graduate of local Colby College, expressed interest in the facility and was selected to spearhead the redevelopment of the Hathaway facility. Boghossian brought a new vision for the facility to the table - one that preserved the history and charm of the facility, but brought its use forward to 21st century. Over the next year, Boghossian, city officials and numerous other individuals and organizations worked diligently to set the wheels in motion to make the project a reality. Due to the complexity of the project and the bureaucratic process, progress moved slower than anticipated.

The project picked up steam in early 2006 when Boghossian teamed up with Niemann Capital, LLC to form Hathaway Holdings and expand the scope of the project to include the former Central Maine Power and Marden's facilities. The project is now known as The Lockwood Mills Complex and encompasses 10+ acres, three facilities, and nearly 500,000 s/f.

The development team plans upwards of a \$56 million investment in the entire project. It is anticipated that full build-out will occur within the next 5 to 7 years. The plan for the Hathaway building, which is five stories and 235,000 s/f, includes loft apartments on the top two floors, office space on the third floor, a conference center, business incubator, and office space on the second floor, and office, retail, restaurant, and public space on the ground floor. Construction of this Hathaway portion of the project is underway as numerous tenants and residents are inquiring to become part of this unique and exciting project. A formal groundbreaking was held in early January.

In addition to being dramatic, world-class space with a great location adjacent to downtown and tremendous views of the Kennebec River, the entire project is located in a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District and is also designated as a Pine Tree Development Zone Site, which affords businesses tremendous incentives and tax benefits for job creation. The facilities are also listed on the National Historic Register, which makes them eligible for federal and state historic tax credits.

But perhaps the greatest asset that comes with the project is the qualified and abundant workforce that is readily available in Central Maine. Our central location along I-95 affords us a labor draw extending up to 50+ miles and local employers continually extol the dedication, quality and work ethic of our people.

Plans for the CMP and Marden's buildings include additional phases to add more residential units, college student housing, commercial, and artisan space. The project will also incorporate green and public space and allow residents and visitors to utilize the riverfront area. There are also plans to "connect" the project more closely with downtown to create a more vibrant urban core.

As with other developments in Central Maine, such as our world-class business park, FirstPark, and the recent attraction of T-Mobile and their 700+ quality jobs, this project symbolizes a major milestone in our economic transformation. The entire region is taking proactive steps to proactively prepare for and embrace the new economy. We invite you to be a part of it.

John Butera is the executive director of the Central Maine Growth Council, Waterville, ME.

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