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Work starts on Cotton Mill Place

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SIMPSONVILLE — Woodside Cotton Mill was a vibrant part of the Simpsonville community for decades, employing thousands of people and becoming a center for the city's economy.

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The mill operated 81 years before closing its doors in 1989.

Today, the rebirth and transformation of the mill into Cotton Mill Place, which will be a village with its own mix of living, shopping, recreation and dining, has people in Simpsonville hoping it will play a large role in breathing new life into the city's downtown.

As part of the first phase of the mill's transformation, 25 condominiums are being constructed. Fifteen of the residential spaces were recently sold at an auction, and the remaining units are still for sale.

The mill sits two blocks from Main Street in Simpsonville, and for Ross Jones, owner and developer of Cotton Mill Place and a Credo Land Holdings partner, this project is an opportunity to preserve the city's history and give these buildings a place in the community again.

"The cotton mill and the textile industry as a whole were the economic lifeblood for this region for a long time," Jones said. "These buildings deserve an opportunity to find a place in the

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community."

He said the project, which could take two to three years to complete, would bring people back downtown to live and play.

"There will be a lot of people meeting and greeting and walking the streets, much like you see in downtown Greenville now," Jones said.

The plans for Cotton Mill Place include a restaurant, commercial spaces and stores, several parks and green spaces, a reflection pond with fountains and a fitness center and terrace.

Jones said those involved anticipate more residential units, with the preliminary drawing showing room for 66 residential units.

These first 25 are part of the \$6.5 million first phase. They should be completed and ready for their owners to move in by January 2006.

Bob Leonardi, owner of The Auction Company and Real Estate, Inc., which did the auction for the first phase condominiums, said prices ranged from about \$92,500 to more than \$250,000.

The development has flats, New York-style lofts and unique live-work units that have an office environment on the ground floor but living area above that.

Leonardi said people are increasingly becoming interested in the industrial style the mill has. That means residents will see exposed brick walls, big windows and large, exposed beams in the ceilings.

"People are just really embracing that (industrial) feel."

And Jones said he thinks some people are interested in projects like the mill because they are embracing a new American dream.

Jones said seniors are becoming much more active and want to be in the same place as their friends, close to things like coffee shops and other activities they can enjoy.

And as for young professionals, he sees people coming in who want to trade in cutting grass outside of their three-bed, three-bath home for being a part of a community where they live, work and play.

Jones said the Cotton Mill Place project could offer that lifestyle.

For him, the project also lets the cotton mill, once an economic and industrial center, come full circle — this time as a residential, cultural and commercial center for the downtown.

Anyone interested in residential space at the Mill can call 864-423-3850 or go by the sales office and model at Cotton Mill Place at 300 South Street.

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