



Monarch

on the Merrimack

BY ALBERTO SURÍS

Information from the MassInnovation web site and Immigrant City Archives was used for this article.



SHORT HISTORY OF THE WOOD MILL

Build in 1905 by William Madison Wood, the son of Portuguese immigrants, located on the south bank of the Merrimack River in Lawrence, Massachusetts, the Worsted Wood Mill is the largest original mill building standing in the city. This beautiful building stretches along the Merrimack, with breathtaking views across the river to downtown.

At its heyday, and because the Wood Mill used the most modern machinery, it was by far the most productive and largest single manufacturer of woolen and worsted fabrics in the nation. At its height, the AWC, company founded by Wood and his Father in Law, Frederick Ayer, occupied seven mills and produced and controlled 20% of the United States' textile products.

Like other manufacturing companies in the area, the AWC left Lawrence and the Wood Mill after World War II became silent. In 1959, one of its wings was razed and a few years later some companies moved in. The building currently houses some tenants, like The Psychological Center, Lawrence/Methuen Community Coalition and Malden Mills.

As it stands today, the mill has nearly thirty acres of floor space (about 1.3 million square feet). The mill is nearly 1,600 feet (close to one third of a mile - more than 4 football fields) in length and is six stories high, and will soon be reinvented as Lawrence's first premiere mixed-use residential community, by MassInnovation, LLC.

Probably while driving around Lawrence, you have noticed a huge green canvas with a beautiful monarch butterfly spreading its wings, attached to the top portion of the Worsted Wood Mill building located at the corner of Merrimack and Union Streets.

"The butterfly is just an idea starting in Lawrence, coming out of its shell", said Robert Ansin, President and CEO of MassInnovation LLC. After years of abandon, the Wood Mill is now enjoying new ownership under Ansin, a smart growth developer, who plans to transform it into a mixed use community, accommodating a variety of complementary uses including residential, retail and commercial tenants.

Planned improvements include a riverwalk and a riverfront park, rooftop gardens, alternative energy systems, and state-of-the-art tenant services. "It seems like a long time, but we have been busy in the planning," said Ansin who took over the building two years ago.

With the Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority's new transportation center directly across Merrimack Street, the renovated Wood Mill will feature easy access to direct passenger rail service to Boston. This project serves as a model of transit-oriented development offering a live, work, and play alternative to residents of Lawrence, the Merrimack Valley and Greater Boston regions.

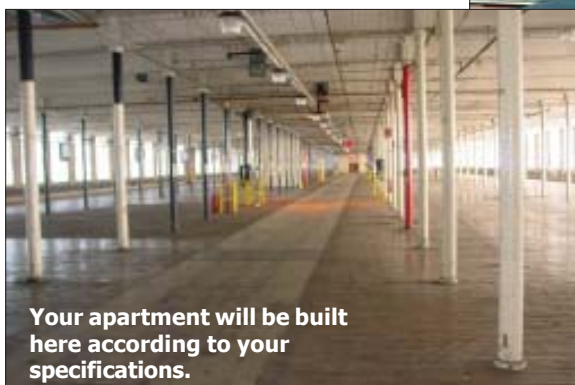
Not only is Lawrence a lively urban city, but it also offers many things to see. Known as the Immigrant City, Lawrence has always been a multi-ethnic and multicultural location for all.

Currently, the population of roughly 70,000 is largely Latino. This has influenced the local economy as well as the city's culture and activities. Lawrence still maintains a 35% manufacturing-based economy with several mills still at work with such industries as New Balance, Malden Mills and Cardinal Shoe.

The city also has art exhibits at the Essex Art Center and a



MassInnovation had built several structures like this inside the massive building to help the buyer have an idea of the actual size of their future apartment.



Your apartment will be built here according to your specifications.



"I-95 is right there," said Bob Ansin pointing to the highway.

wide range of cultural activities that celebrate the diversity of Lawrence. Also educational institutions like Cambridge Community College and Northern Essex Community College offer many degree programs.

Plans to redevelop the facility into a "mixed-use" community, includes 120 condos and 75 rental units (with unusual 14' - 16' ceilings, fully sprinkled), office space, retail stores and the possibility of a café and a restaurant.

The condos will have single, double and triple levels, depending on which floor they are located. The third level will open to a terrace overlooking the Merrimack River. On the opposite side they will have in view the lush vegetation of the Andovers. "Andoverites who have shown interest in buying

prefer having the woods in sight," said Ansin when touring the building with me.

According to Arah Schuur, MassInnovation Director of Planning and Development, condos are well priced, starting under \$200,000, depending when you buy them. Eventually prices will go up as soon as construction starts. Condos and Rentals will be available in the Summer of 2007.

BUILDING AMENITIES

- 1.3 million square feet
- 300,000 square feet available for immediate occupancy; can be subdivided
- 14' - 16' ceilings, fully sprinkled
- Multiple modern loading docks
- Multiple freight & passenger elevators

- Outstanding highway access to I-95, I-93, I-95
- Ample free parking
- River access
- Located across the street from the Lawrence Inter-modal Transportation Center featuring express, 45 minute commuter rail service to Boston, bus service, shuttle service to and from Logan Airport
- Future plans to redevelop facility into a "mixed-use" community, accommodating a variety of complementary uses including residential lofts, artists' studios, light assembly/distribution, education and retail
- Planned improvements include alternative energy systems, high tech security, rooftop gardens, and state-of-the-art tenant services (such as day

care, laundry and dry cleaning pick-up/delivery, pharmacy, copy center, kennel)

"I believe that healthy buildings are the foundation for strong and vibrant neighborhoods. At MassInnovation we transform historic mills into homes, places to shop and work, schools, and recreational facilities. These mixed-use communities repair the urban fabric and revitalize central areas of our cities. Our work has been called adaptive reuse, mill renewal, restoration — I call it building history for a sustainable future."

Robert Ansin,
Founder, President and CEO

For more Information: 978-794-4359