

# Mausert Block's revival

By Phil Demers, North Adams Transcript  
Posted: 03/26/2012 12:43:43 AM EDT



ADAMS -- Three of four storefront spaces in Park Street's Mausert Block building may already be booked by the time work there ends within several weeks, according to construction project manager for REDPM Holly Stenson.

"We've received letters of intent from two businesses and are talking with a third," Stenson said. "What we see overall with this building is it's going to

create 15 to 30 new, permanent, full-time jobs downtown."

REDPM is the real estate property management firm of the owners, Braytonville Properties LLC -- who bought the building in March of 2011 for \$60,000 -- and are charged with the design and oversight of renovations to the building.

Stenson did not reveal names of the businesses interested in the space, but said 23 Park St. is being fitted for a restaurant that will make its home there, and the two others will be retail stores.

Behind the building, outdoor seating will be installed for the restaurant. Stenson said the intent is to take advantage of the Ashuwillticook Trail crowd, since the path traverses the property there.

"We thought it was a no-brainer," Stenson said. "With the amount of traffic up and down the path, it's like having two main streets."

Many town officials have advocated a similar setup, including Director of Community Development Donna Cesan.

"When we first spoke to the designers," Cesan said, "it was like, 'Finally, somebody understands what we're trying to do with these buildings.' "

Stenson said REDPM is aiming to have the businesses open sometime this summer.

After the storefronts are completed, interior work is scheduled to continue. Stenson said the company is currently waiting for building permits to be approved, then work can begin on an egress stair -- needed to meet building code compliance standards -- and will turn 18 upper-floor studio apartments into 11 two to three bedroom units.

The Mausert Block has been unoccupied for several years. Boston architect Chiong Lin purchased the building back in 2007 for \$600,000, but subsequently fell behind on taxes and declared bankruptcy due to the poor economy.

According to Stenson, the company has paid more than \$1 million for renovations, with 80 percent of that figure being reinvested in the community by hiring local work. The company paid for the installation and materials used to renovate the store front area as part of an agreement with the town, after Community Development Block Grant funds covered the cost of facade work.

With the building being more than 90 years old, locals who are curious to know what will become of the iconic "Woolworth's" sign, bearing the name of the old department store located in the building during the 1930s, may be pleased to know that Massachusetts Historical Commission requested that REDPM keep it there.

"It wasn't in the original design," Stenson said. "But now we've scraped off the old paint and are doing some additional touch ups, and it should look nice."