



Stephen and Holly Stenson and the son cut a ribbon announcing the opening of an office in the Mausert Block on Park Street. The Stensons say this is just the first of many ribbon cuttings to come as the long-delayed residential and commercial project nears completion.

## Mausert Block Takes Big Step With Opening of Development Office

**By Jack Guerino**

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ADAMS, Mass. — After six years of construction and waiting, a portion of the Mausert Block has finally opened with more areas to follow in the coming year.

It's just an office but its completion marks a major step forward in the long-awaited renovation of the former Woolworth building.

"So this is just the beginning and it has taken a while but it has been a generation since the last one," developer Stephen Stenson said. "We hope this achievement is a catalyst for economic development and we hope other buildings can come online and increase the potential of Adams."

There was a ribbon-cutting ceremony Friday afternoon and reception to mark the opening of the REDPM office — the first opening in the building since Stenson and his wife, Holly, purchased the historic Park Street property in 2011.

The former Woolworth's building was purchased by the Stensons as Braytonville LLC for \$60,000 in and is being developed by their real estate management firm REDPM, which stands for real estate development property management.

Exterior work on the 1920 brick structure was largely completed in 2013. REDPM matched a \$125,000 federal grant the town received in 2011 to overhaul the exterior and storefronts.

Stenson said there have been delays in the project and they had difficulties securing a bank loan to finish it until MassDevelopment came in to lend a hand.

"They really went up to bat for us, so they have been fantastic," he said. "They stepped up when no one would."

Work began on the interior of the building in 2014 when a \$700,000 MassDevelopment loan was secured for the work.

Stenson said the project was also stalled by "regulatory delays" that held the project up for two years but after working things out with the town, the project was reignited last year and since then has been moving full steam ahead.

The development consists of two large commercial spaces on the first floor with new window facades and 10 apartments -- nine two-bedroom and one three-bedroom -- on the two floors above. The rear will have a patio and two of the second-story units are planned to have roof terraces.



**The Stensons are congratulated by state Sen. Adam Hinds.**

The building had had 18 apartments and 23 storage units when the Stensons purchased it. The major tenant, Woolworth, had closed in 1993.

Most of the major mechanical work and construction is completed on the upper floors and finish work is starting, including new kitchens and bathrooms with washer/dryers, restoration of the vintage moldings, gas fireplaces and floor refinishing.

Stenson said the plan is to begin unveiling the apartments in November.

The next step will be in December with the opening of the Greylock Collaborative, an incubator space, in what had been Woolworth's at 19 Park St. and a restaurant is expected to follow at 23 Park St. That space is wide open but unfinished at this point.

Stenson pointed to early designs that will link the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail that runs directly behind the building to the yet-to-be-established eatery.

"When you look at this right on the rail trail, we will have the ramp coming up to the restaurant," he said. "We plan to put a bar here, so you can actually ride right up to the bar."

Stenson said there was a focus on creating an energy-efficient and sustainable building.

He said, in the end, the project will come in at about \$1.6 million.

Stenson thought it the first major residential and commercial development since Berkshire Mill No. 1 was renovated in 1987 and said he hopes it encourages others to invest in Adams.

"We want to encourage people to do other stuff. It has been over a generation since anything like this has happened," he said. "So, we just planted the flag and showed that it can be done so hopefully this is a catalyst for economic development."

As for this project, Stenson said he can't wait to unveil the next portion of it.

"This is the beginning of the end instead of the end of the beginning," he said.