

Bourne Mill is on path toward revitalization

01:00 AM EST on Tuesday, February 13, 2007

By Gina Macris, Journal Staff Writer

TIVERTON — The Bourne Mill complex, an important link in the history of the textile industry in the Fall River area, has been added to the National Register of Historic Places.

The designation makes the complex eligible for historic preservation tax credits at the federal level and in two states, Rhode Island and Massachusetts, according to Jan Brodie, spokeswoman for the Armory Revival Co. of Providence, the developer of the 20-acre property, which is in North Tiverton but has frontage on Cook Pond in Fall River.

Brodie said those tax credits, along with separate Rhode Island tax credits for developers of affordable housing, are critical to the success of a \$50 million revitalization effort planned for the property.

The master plan for the project, which would include residential and commercial development and modernization of sewer and water services in the surrounding North Tiverton neighborhood, recently won conditional approval from the Tiverton Planning Board.

Thirty percent of the residential units will be affordable housing, Brodie said.

The National Register listing, in recognition to the mill's contributions to the history of architecture and industry, was announced by Frederick C. Williamson, chairman of the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission.

The history of the North Tiverton complex, which includes 23 granite and red brick buildings erected between 1881 and 1951, off State Avenue, is closely linked with the industrial heritage of Fall River, once considered the capital of cotton manufacturing in North America.

The Bourne Mill, named after founder Jonathan Bourne, flourished until the turn of the 20th century, in part because of Bourne's introduction of profit-sharing, according to the Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission.

Automation and competition from Southern mills began to have their impact on the local textile economy after 1900, although the Bourne mill continued to weave high-quality cotton cloth through World War II and the beginning of the post-war era.

Berkshire-Hathaway purchased the company in 1953 and closed it in 1961.

Edward F. Sanderson, executive director of the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission, said Rhode Island's historic rehabilitation tax credit will not only help preserve the historic property but enable it to once again contribute to the economic growth of the area.