

# Mill redevelopment makes administrative progress

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## EVENTS

**Allegan  
Saturday, Nov. 13,  
9:30 a.m.-3p.m.**  
Allegan Arts Council  
Holiday Art Show at  
Allegan High School. Visit  
www.alleganarts.com for  
details.

**Fennville  
Tuesday, Nov. 16,  
5:30-7:30 p.m.**  
Chamber/DDA network-  
ing at Salt of the Earth. See  
Page 4 for details.

**Otsego  
Friday, Dec. 3, 7 p.m.**  
Christmas parade. See  
Page 3 for details.

**Plainwell  
Tuesday, Nov. 9,  
7:30 a.m.**  
Plainwell DDA/TIFA/  
BRA meeting at Plainwell  
City Hall.

**Wayland  
Friday, Dec. 3**  
Holiday festivities kick  
off. See Page 4 for details.

**BY ERICA STONE  
INTERNS**

"If I had a nickel for every time someone asks me about the Paper Mill..." said Plainwell City Manager Erik Wilson.

He's not exactly sure what he would do with all those nickels, but Wilson said he's sure he would accumulate a fortune before the project is complete. He said everywhere he goes around Plainwell people are interested in what's happening at the old mill and what kind of progress has been made.

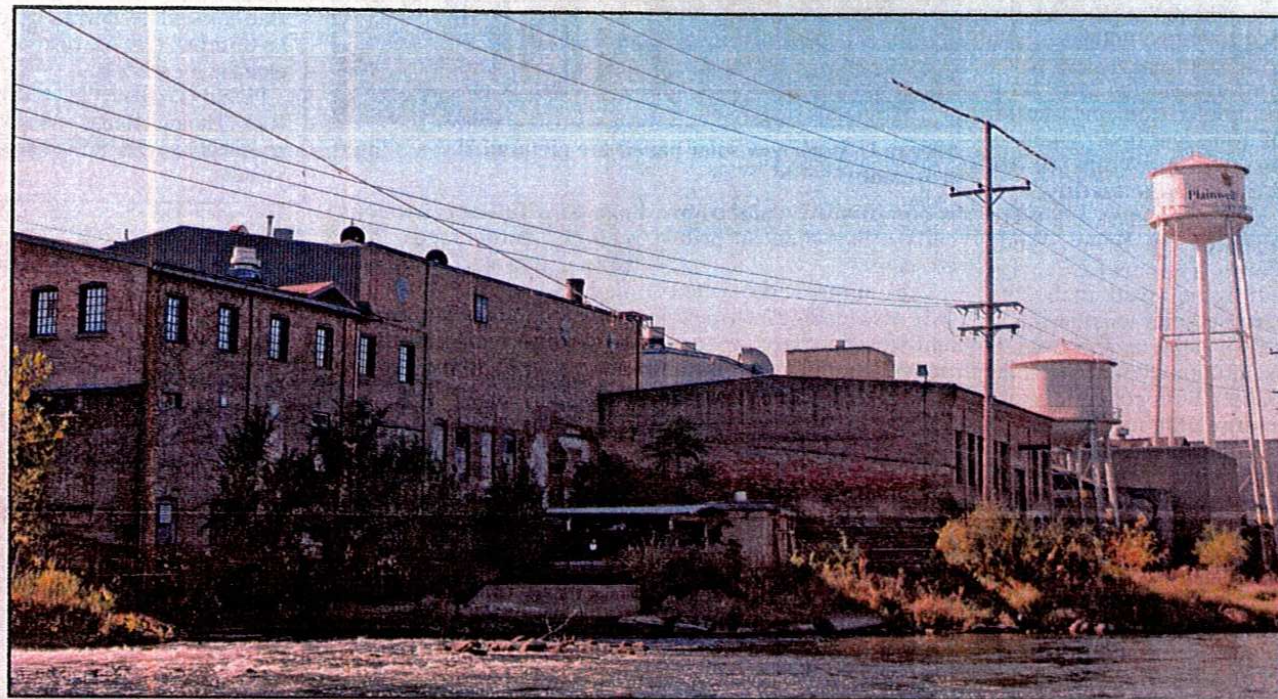
"I'd say we're making steady progress," Wilson said. "It's been mostly administrative progress, so far, processing paperwork and work plans."

Nicholas White, project manager for developers, Conestoga, Rovers and Associates said they have been wading through the process of drafting work plans and filing paperwork. They are currently trying to finish up the historical and brownfield development plans so the city can see and approve them before the real work begins.

White also said that the bids for the work at Fannie Pell Park went out Monday, Oct. 18. They hope to receive bids quickly so the construction of a new bridge across the mill race and a bigger parking lot can be completed before winter.

Wilson said a \$693,000 grant is helping pay for the Fannie Pell Park work.

White said that while he feels that the development of the site is going well, making sure that they cross their T's and dot their I's has forced some scheduling adjustments. "According to the new



The former Plainwell Paper Mill is pictured from across the Kalamazoo River. (Photo by Dan Pepper)

timeline, I would say, we're maybe even a little ahead of schedule," said White.

The new schedule delays some of the work planned for this fall until spring. The biggest rescheduling involves the demolition of some of the buildings not slated for renovation.

"You probably won't see the wrecking balls until spring," Wilson said.

He said part of the reason for delaying the demolition is the city's desire to save as much of the historical site as possible.

White said CRA has been pursuing tax credits for renovation of historical buildings, especially for the building they plan to turn into their new company headquarters.

"We are trying to restore the building as much as we can, and that means it takes a little longer," White said.

Wilson said the process is taking longer because the plans have to be almost surgically precise for the demolition. It is a little bit harder to take out parts of buildings, or a whole building if they are in close proximity to something they are trying to save because of historical value.

"It would be a lot easier and faster if we could just knock everything down, but we're not," Wilson said.

Both White and Wilson said that environmental or toxic waste/contamination issues have not caused the delays.

Wilson said that there is an old wastewater treatment plant and a coal pile that will have to be tested after demolition, but that everything on the site is manageable.

"The most important thing for people to understand is that just because it is a super-

fund site, doesn't mean that we can't develop it. We have no concerns about any brownfield issues delaying or stopping development," said Wilson.

Wilson said there is one way in which the city might benefit from delaying the demolition until spring.

"We're looking to do a documentary on the Plainwell Paper Mill. We want to capture what this place was, as well as what it will be," Wilson said.

He said the city had previously had planned to have a documentary on the mill done by a professor from Grand Valley State University. However, at the last minute the professor pulled out of the project.

Wilson said the city is still hoping to be able to make a quality documentary, but they are looking for a "Plan B."

He said that while many people have taken pictures of the mill, the city would like to see a professional documentary that includes other elements than old stills and snapshots.

"The key is to visually capture the Mill before demolition. Because once it's demolished, this piece of our history is gone," Wilson said.

## Allegan County's Chamber & Business News

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