

# Settlement removes one hurdle from mill-site redevelopment

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Special to HomeTown Gazette

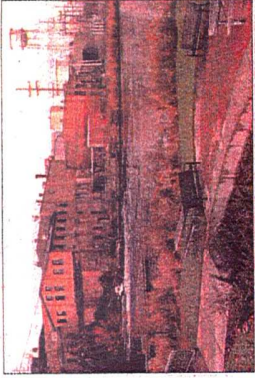
PLAINWELL—Efforts to redevelop the vacant Plainwell Paper Mill inched forward this month after a former owner of the site agreed to contribute to cleaning up the site and the former 12th Street Landfill.

"It's good news to start the new

year," City Administrator Erik Wilson said. Wilson and other city officials learned Jan. 4 that Weyerhaeuser Co., a former owner of the bankrupt Plainwell Paper Mill, finally has settled with the Justice Department and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to contribute to the cleanup and the cost of cleaning up the 55-acre mill site in downtown Plainwell and the landfill.

The settlement calls for Weyerhaeuser to reimburse the EPA some \$138,000 in costs related to the two sites and another \$8.2 million to fund the cleanup of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB) contamination in the Kalamazoo River. The settlement also calls for a faster release from the agency.

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ROBERT MARWELL/SPECIAL TO HOMETOWN GAZETTE  
Federal officials have announced a settlement that requires Weyerhaeuser Co., which once operated Plainwell Paper Co., to pay more than \$6 million toward environmental cleanup.

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The settlement also requires Weyerhaeuser to withdraw its objections to a redevelopment plan filed with its parent, Plainwell Inc., the release states. Those objections were stalling

efforts by the city of Plainwell to get the vacant mill site released to a redevelopment project initiated by Plainwell Inc. in November 2000.

The city hopes to acquire the property by paying back taxes and other costs. The settlement also requires sections of the property until a developer can be identified to implement a proposed revitalization plan devel-

oped last year by a 29-member advisory committee.

That plan calls for a variety of commercial and residential uses to fill the former mill site, situated between the Kalamazoo River and

MSR on the west end of town. "All three agencies — Weyerhaeuser, Plainwell Inc. and the EPA — have agreed with the settlement, so now it becomes a bankruptcy question," Wilson said.

City officials met last week with attorneys to discuss what steps need to be taken before the bankruptcy court will agree to transfer ownership of the property, Wilson said.