



## Grant used for mill district master plan

By Kate Irish Collins

Assistant Editor-Sun Chronicle

BIDDEFORD (Sep 27): The city of Biddeford will use a grant of almost \$60,000 from the U.S. Department of Commerce to create a master plan for mill district redevelopment, according to City Manager John Bubier.



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The mill district, located in Biddeford's downtown, is ripe for redevelopment, he said.

Bubier said many of the mill owners have already met informally with each other and city officials to talk about joint issues of interest, such as parking and accessibility. Now the grant money will help the mill owners create a cohesive development plan.

"There are a number of buildings and nine or 10 different owners. There are no formalized access points and no connections between the buildings. The mill district is really a city within a city" Bubier said. "Our next step is to sit down with the mill owners and developers and talk about the issues."

"There are a lot of exciting things going on in the mill district, but we need proper planning for the future," said North Dam Mill owner Doug Sanford.

He said the city applied for the planning grant more than a year ago with an inquiry to the Department of Commerce, which then encouraged Biddeford to put in a formal application the help defray the cost of creating a master plan for mill redevelopment.

Bubier also hopes to include the development team currently working on an \$80-million redevelopment plan for Saco Island in the discussions. In particular, Bubier would like to create a pedestrian connection between the Biddeford mill district and the new development planned for the island.

A couple of the historic mills lining the Saco River – the North Dam Mill and the Riverdam Millyard – have already been redeveloped for light industrial, commercial and retail uses. The city is also considering plans to include housing in the mill district.

The North Dam Mill is home to a variety of businesses, including a yoga studio, a martial arts studio, a dance studio, a massage therapist, Union House Coffee, an engineering firm, a design firm and a fancy food store.

The River Dam Millyard is home to a cabinetmaker's shop, a leather goods shop, an antique shop, a plastics maker and a telecommunications company, among others.