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Live the loft-style at the Cotton Mill

By RUSS OLIVO

PAWTUCKET — We hear so much about the region's heritage as a textile manufacturing center that it's easy to become inured to it. Yet it is still an awesome thing to be in the midst of the brick, beams and steel pillars of a classic mill, a brand of architecture so imposing you can almost feel the place vibrate with the clatter of old looms.

It's like that here at Slater Cotton Mill Apartments, where history oozes from every corner of a mammoth, red-brick monolith that has been artfully transformed into 124 units of sleek, loft-style living quarters.

The \$20 million project is a product of Brady Sullivan Properties, a real estate group

Revolution in America, and the wooden mill he pioneered in the late 1700s is now a museum about a quarter mile from this site, on the edge of the Blackstone River.

In most respects, the Slater Cotton Mill is a typical example of the factory architecture of the era, save for the oversized windows, which are about 12 feet high and eight feet wide. As part of the rehab, says Starr, every window in the mill — about 400 in all — were removed, rebuilt and replaced. "We had to replicate the originals," he says.

For the rehab, they represent a perfect blend of form and function, simultaneously serving as major focal points of each unit while they allow generous amounts of natural

75 South Union St. Pawtucket

WHAT: Loft-style apartments

FEATURES: 10 different floor plans, ranging from studios of 600 square feet to larger, multi-bedroom units with roughly 1,880 square feet featuring exposed brick, wooden ceiling beams, vaulted ceilings, hardwood floors and oversized windows.

PRICE: Rents range from \$1,040 a month for a 1-bedroom, and 2-bedrooms start at \$1,355.

that has completed a number of other mill conversions, primarily in Massachusetts and New Hampshire, where it is headquartered, according to Chris Starr, a joint venture partner in the project. In addition to the Slater Cotton Mill site, which began leasing in April after a 10-month rehab, the company recently finished a similar project in Providence known as Grant Mill, with about 75 units available.

"Our specialty is putting new life in old mills," says Starr during a recent tour of the Slater site, at 75 South Union St. "We love the building. We love everything about it."

But Starr doesn't take credit for the finished product. "Without the talents of city planners, firefighters, building inspectors, an army of subcontractors, lenders and the state's tax credit specialists, none of it would have come to fruition," says Starr. "This type of project comes together with the help of many hands."

The end result is an inviting blend of old and new, the masonry bones of a late-19th century mill — with a contemporary sheen. The original structure is four and five stories high, with nearly 170,000 square feet of floor space. Built in 1881, the mill company — references to the Slater name notwithstanding — was founded by one of the successors to Samuel Slater in the flourishing textile industry of the day, William P. Sayles. Slater, of course, was the great-granddaddy of the state's textile industry, if not the entire Industrial

light to spill copiously into the living quarters. And every unit in the building has at least two of them.

There are about 10 different floor plans available ranging from studios of 600 square feet to larger, multi-bedroom units with roughly 1,880 square feet, according to Alison Parent, the property manager. Some of the units come with elevated loft spaces.

No matter the size, the design hallmarks of these lofts are the preserved infrastructure of the old mill itself — exposed brick, muscular wooden ceiling beams, vaulted ceilings, elegantly refinished hardwood floors.

"The Providence," the design of a mid-size unit, is a one-bedroom with a long, hardwood hall that opens into a spacious area encompassing the living, dining and kitchen quarters. The kitchen features handsomely rich, cherry cabinets, granite counters, a double sink with a disposal and a full range of stainless steel appliances, including an electric range, dishwasher, microwave and refrigerator.

The living/dining area has an unimaginably high, vaulted ceiling and the main wall features two of those oversized windows that gird the building. Pendant lighting and an overhead ceiling fan give the room a contemporary flair.

The Providence also features a full bath with his-and-her sinks in a granite-top vanity, a tub and a stackable washer and dryer. The large master bedroom is conveniently private, enclosed behind a central corridor and the bath, but a large cutaway



Photos by Butch Adams

At the Slater Cotton Mill apartments, located at 75 South Union Street in Pawtucket, the double 12-foot windows brighten the dining area and living room in a 1-bedroom Providence floor plan unit.

Below, a view of the kitchen with a breakfast bar and the dining area.

Bottom, a view of the fitness center, which includes six cardio machines, free weights, and an all-in-one Nautilus machine.



See it for yourself

CONTACT: The leasing office at (401) 722-4001 to schedule a visit, or e-mail slatercottonmill@bradysullivan.com



in the upper part of the wall allows the natural light from the main living area to spill into the sleeping quarters.

The developers have done a fine job of preserving the historical aspects of the original structure in a way that makes them new again, without sacrificing their historical lineage. The hardwoods that run through the Providence,

for example, are elegantly refinished, but not so much that their rough-hewn character has been expunged. The reviews have been quite favorable, according to Parent.

"People are very impressed," she says. "They say, 'This is gorgeous.'"

Indeed, it has not taken the Slater Cotton Mill Apartments long to endear

itself with seekers of stylish apartment living. Among those who now call the complex home are several members of the Pawtucket Red Sox, though it would not be proper for the landlords to identify them by name. After some four months on the market, the Slater site has an occupancy rate of about 40 percent, and new people are

signing leases on a regular basis. But there are still over 60 units that are still unleased.

Beyond the historical charm of the setting, denizens of Slater Cotton Mill Apartments also have access to an assortment of common amenities that make it a comfortable, convenient place to

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live. Perhaps the most inviting is the "Theatre Room," a nine-seat, state-of-the-art home theater with a 52-inch, wall-mounted flat-screen TV equipped with Blue Ray DVD. Even if you're not a fan of the cinema arts, you'll want to join your movie-loving friends here just for a chance to sit in the seats — plush, leather-upholstered, electric-powered, reclining seats with built-in cup-holders. The popcorn-maker is on standby.

Slater Cotton Mill Apartments also has a fitness center equipped with the latest in elliptical cross-trainers, bicycle machines and weightlifting gear. If that's not enough exercise, there's a basketball half-court on the first floor for hoops lovers, and when you're in the mood for entertaining you can take your friends to the rooftop deck, with a stunning view of the cityscape.

Located at the edge of downtown Pawtucket, Slater Cotton Mill Apartments is conveniently located on bus lines and is close to I-95, making for an easy commute to Providence or Boston. Rents range from about \$1,040 a month for a one-bedroom and two-bedrooms start at \$1,355. For a limited time, however, the one bedroom units are available with three months free rent on a 15-month lease, the two-bedroom units, two months free with a 14-month lease.

For more information or to schedule a visit, contact the leasing office at 401-722-4001. E-mail can also be directed to slater-cottonmill@bradysullivan.com.



Above, a view of the bedroom with attached bathroom.

Right, a view of the complex's half-court basketball court, which is open 24 hours.

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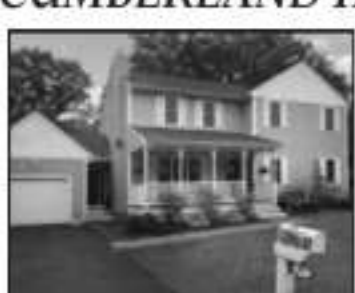
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Top, a view of the living room in a one-bedroom unit.
Middle right, Above, the exterior of the Slater Cotton Mill apartments, located at 75 South Union Street in Pawtucket, from the South Union Street side of the apartment complex.

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