

With new businesses comes new parking

By Drake Lucas
Staff writer

North Andover - The new owners of East Mill are adding parking on High Street in hopes the area will become a destination point.

RCG LLC is renovating the 235,000-square-foot former Davis and Furber mill complex at the corner of High and Water streets and putting in shops, restaurants and condominiums, in addition to businesses that are already there.

Parking in the area is concentrated in lots and a garage behind the buildings, but building owner David Steinbergh said short-term street parking and re-marked crosswalks will make it easier for people to park for an hour to shop or have lunch. Employees and tenants would have separate parking.

"We have a lot of parking on site, just not in the right places," Steinbergh said. "We want a presence on the street so cars will drive by and see the front door and know where to go."

Twenty-nine parking spaces will be added to the east side of High Street, 27 for one-hour parking and two for 15-minute parking. The time restrictions will end after 6 p.m. The curbing also will jut out into the street to designate the parking area.

Street parking still will be banned on the other side of the street.

Other improvements include relocating and restriping the crosswalks, and adding trees to High Street. Steinbergh said he hopes to put in the parking and crosswalk lines as soon as possible, but the other changes might have to wait until spring.

The mill buildings are left over from the 1800s and 1900s when the woolen industry was booming in North Andover. The neighborhood around the mills was built as housing for millworkers.

After the mills closed in the late 1900s, many former mills were converted to condominiums and businesses. The East Mill was renovated for business use but remains 75 percent empty. People still live in the housing around the mills, but few businesses draw outside people to the area.

RCG LLC bought the complex at the beginning of the year and is moving forward with the first phase of construction to put in 20 loft apartments and a 3,000-square-foot restaurant named High Street Grill, which is backed by the same people as East Coast Grill in Cambridge.

A Bickram yoga studio is coming before the end of the year. Steinbergh said he also wants to attract a coffee shop, bookstore and other places where people can hang out.

Town planners have praised the project as a way to revitalize the area as the town works to refresh nearby downtown.