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## Condo project looks to renew Pillsbury Mill

The developer behind the East Bank Mills condo project at the Pillsbury A Mill complex is unveiling plans and attracting interest.

By [Terry Collins](#), Star Tribune

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Sure, Kit Richardson knows there's "a lull" in the Minneapolis condo market after a big bang the past few years.

But perched high above his mammoth construction site near the Mississippi Riverfront, he's sold on making what's old brand new again.

He also hoping others will buy into his 4-year-old concept called the East Bank Mills, a 1,000-condominium unit development at the historic Pillsbury A Mill complex that will change the city's skyline.

Last year, the Minneapolis City Council approved the project over the objections of the city's Heritage Preservation Commission. The commission believed the development, with its four towers of 15, 20, 24 and 27 stories, would damage the area's historic integrity by dwarfing the old mill, a National Historic Landmark.

Now Richardson has to come through on his promises to blend the restoration of aging structures while constructing the new buildings and find people willing to live in them.

"This is by far the biggest, innovative, challenging and most complex endeavor we've ever done," Richardson, a principal in the development firm Schafer Richardson, said, fixated on a stunning view of downtown Minneapolis and rushing waters of the Mississippi.

"We're in it for the long haul."

If the turnout of prospective buyers at a sales event Thursday was any indication, he could beat the odds. Several hundred attended the unveiling of his plans for the estimated \$400 million project on SE. Main Street.

"The visual impact will surely be dramatic," City Council Member Diane Hofstede said during Thursday's event. "This will be a great addition to the city."

Condo sales have begun for two buildings -- the Cooper, a soon-to-be-built 146-unit, 12-story structure, and Warehouse 2, a restored building with 35 units. The latter was part of Pillsbury's original milling and flour operations at St. Anthony Falls.

While gazing at maps and floor plans, attendees also saw renderings of other buildings for the 7.9-acre site, still years away from construction.

The Pillsbury A Mill, built at St. Anthony Falls, was once home to the world's largest flour mill and the C.A. Pillsbury and Co., founded in 1872. Milling ceased there nearly four years ago, around the time Schafer Richardson acquired the site.

But pointing to a model of the project in his sales office, Richardson notes those structures will be built side by side and complement the three renovated historic buildings, the A Mill, South Mill and the Red Tile.

The development offers a unique mix of old and new, Richardson said. Along with the modern fixings such as fitness center, there also will be structures with exposed brick and high ceilings as well.

While much of heavy milling equipment has been removed, Richardson pointed out during a tour of the South Mill building on Thursday that the rusty drive shafts and wheels still attached to the ceiling (and the two pigeons perched atop them) will likely remain as a reminder of the area's storied history.

Only the birds will be gone, he joked.

Richardson said Thursday that while the condo market in and around downtown is stagnant, another of his projects under construction, the 730 Lofts, is selling three new units a week -- good by his standards.

Richardson believes the mixed-use development, with prices ranging from \$200,000 to \$800,000, will attract first-timer homeowners and young professionals (key targets of the entry-level condo market) wanting to live closer to work and suburban empty nesters looking to downsize and rediscover city life.

Dave Horn, who lives in St. Paul and works in Minneapolis, said he's envisioned living in the A Mill since hearing it would be converted into condos.

"This is my dream home, right here," said Horn, pointing to the model display. "Hopefully, I'll get in."

Chris and Audrey Henningson said with their kids out of the house for more than a decade, they would consider moving out of their home of 25 years for a chance to be closer to the river.

"This area is changing so fast," Chris Henningson said. "It's definitely worth taking a look."

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