

Another mill reborn in Baltimore

By: [Joe Nathanson](#) October 20, 2016



Cities that are successful have to be able to adapt to changing conditions – from changes in technology and economic trends to the latest twists in consumer tastes and household preferences. Among the signs that Baltimore is finding some measure of success are the many instances in which it has been able to find new uses for buildings from its industrial past.

Earlier this year, along with a group of my professional colleagues, I had an opportunity to get a preview of the latest repurposed mill building in the Jones Falls Valley. Whitehall Mill is a \$22 million, 200,000 square foot mixed-use development consisting of 28 loft apartments, offices, a restaurant and a public retail market. Think of Belvedere Square Market along a stream valley. Guided by its developer, David Tufaro, the founder of Terra Nova Ventures, we learned about the unique features involved in converting an historic structure, along with the special challenges of building in a floodplain.

Whitehall Mill is now welcoming its first residents. Soon Baltimore shoppers will also be able to come to the market to obtain fresh produce, the latest catch from the sea and meat from area farms. The plans also have space for a cheese shop, a bakery, coffee selections, and areas for vendors of Asian food and prepared foods. Along with the restaurant located in the former Whitehall Cotton Mill boiler room, the refurbished 19th century building will be able to satisfy many 21st century palates.

Regarding the challenges in realizing the project, to guard against flood waters, aquarium-grade glass had to be installed in windows facing the watercourse. Openings had to be constructed in the opposite walls to relieve pressure from the potential high water. And, per city inspection decree, a bridge had to be built over Clipper Mill Road to accommodate the evacuation of building residents in the event of a flood emergency.

The latest reuse of mills

In spite of these challenges there has been an impressive series of redevelopment ventures involving the adaptive reuse of these 19th century mill buildings. During Baltimore's early development the Jones Falls was attractive to a number of different types of industry. Chief

among them were the cotton mills that found it profitable to manufacture cotton duck, the sail canvas fashioned for the needs of the Chesapeake region's sailing fleet.

Earlier mill redevelopment projects include the Mill Centre, completed in the late 1980s. This building, another textile mill, now is home to a creative community of artists, graphic designers, artisans, photographers, and architects as well as other business professionals and a cross-fit gym. Further north, just below the city line, is the Mount Washington Mill, now the home of a Whole Foods Market, a Starbucks café, a pharmacy, wine shop, other retail stores and offices. Clipper Mill in Woodberry occupies the former site of a Poole and Hunt Foundry and incorporates new lofts in old industrial structures along with entirely new residential structures, all within walking distance of the Woodberry light rail station.

Whitehall Mill is the second mill project of Terra Nova Ventures. Tufaro and his business partner, daughter Jennifer Nolley, completed Mill No. 1, a short distance down Clipper Mill Road, three years ago. That \$44 million development contains 84 apartments, the offices of Evergreen Health Care, and a new restaurant – Cosima's, the latest addition to the local Donna's restaurant chain.

Indeed, these various developments are making the Jones Falls Valley a new destination for choice dining experiences. Along with the northern Italian selections at Cosima's, they include the well-established farm-to-table Woodberry Kitchen in Clipper Mill, the Basque-inspired La Cuchara in Meadow Mill, and the more casual Birrotecca, located between Meadow Mill and Whitehall Mill.

Resilient city

The Jones Falls Valley is no longer the industrial hub of the Baltimore region as it was through much of the 19th century. It does, however, exhibit many of the signs of a resilient city, incorporating some of the legacy of the area's industrial past to meet today's consumer demands.

These include residential units, some lofts as little as 700 square feet, to satisfy the requirements of smaller households. In a few locations, there is the option to rely less on the private automobile, being able to make some trips by bicycle or light rail. There are new options for satisfying a range of shopping and dining experiences. And for some, there is the ability to be located in the heart of the city, yet surrounded by the sights and sounds of a natural greenway.

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