

# TODAY'S SUNBEAM

OCTOBER 28, 1988

## Firm buys five buildings

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Staff Writer

**SALEM**—In what officials called the first major move towards the city's eventual revitalization, Mannington Mills Inc. announced Thursday that it has agreed to purchase five buildings on East Broadway for a price of \$200,000.

The four main purchases are the Mecum Building, the Morton Building, the Old Telegraph Building and the Lummis Building. The purchase also includes a house on Belden Street according to a press release.

A Mannington Mills official said the company is buying the lots from private owners and he expects the negotiations to be completed before January. The Mecum Building will be used to provide a permanent office for Stand Up For Salem Inc., the official said.

"The company is purchasing these properties as part of its own effort to bring about the revitalization of Salem," according to the release.

The company will have a feasibility study done on the buildings, all of which are adjacent and run west along Broadway starting at Walnut Street. The press release also said the company is now committed to restoring the three-story Mecum Building.

"Some of these buildings represent a valuable historic landmark. With these purchases, we are investing in the future of the city and preserving some of its history," said Scott Smith, president and chief executive officer of Mannington Mills and president of Stand Up For Salem.

Don Smartt, a consultant for Stand Up for Salem and a veteran of other rehabilitation projects, said the company's commitment is of vital importance to the revitalization project.

"This is a real leap of faith," he said. "They've stepped up first. On a professional basis, I am really, truly impressed." Smartt said no major company has played as active a role in any other project he has been

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*Donald R. Smartt  
Principal, The Community Advocates*

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involved with. He said the purchase is important because the company will follow guidelines announced by Stand Up for Salem on Aug. 23 by improving business opportunities, rehabilitating a commercial area, providing jobs and training and keeping the city's historic resources intact.

Although Mannington Mills has not defined what will be done with the buildings, Smartt said the company will follow all the guidelines. In the guidelines, officials stated that having a positive attitude about the area is important for the rehabilitation effort.

"In Salem's case, the primary government-related need is security," the report said. The report also said the appointment of Public Safety Director Thomas Smith has led to the start of a favorable relationship between the city government and business.

The report also listed the need to have Salem Community College expand into the city, and said more marketing events need to be held.

The report mentioned that the first step to business revitalization would be an improved commercial building. "An improved commercial building that attracts a strong new merchants and new office tenants would be an important linchpin to downtown revitalization," according to the report.

The report also said the city's low prices for retail space could induce investment in the area, and said the rehabilitation process should serve as the cornerstone for the city's rebirth.

Smartt said the purchase price for the buildings is evidence of low-priced space. "It reflects the relatively low market value."

City Council President James G. Waddington said that low market value will not remain for long. "I think there will be a lot of attention paid to real estate in downtown Salem," said Waddington.

Mayor Chuck Ward said the purchase will show city residents that the revitalization campaign is for real.

"There's been a lot of questions in the past," he said. "I think 'Here it is.' We're going to see something concrete now."

Ward also said Mannington Mills has shown that they usually finish what they start. Both Waddington and Ward said the move may lead others to come to the city.

Waddington also said that it will improve the attitude that residents have about the city. "I think that it's a step in the right direction," he said.

Ward said he expected to see development downtown as a result of Stand Up for Salem but did not expect it to start with a Mannington Mills project.



Don Smartt and The Community Advocates