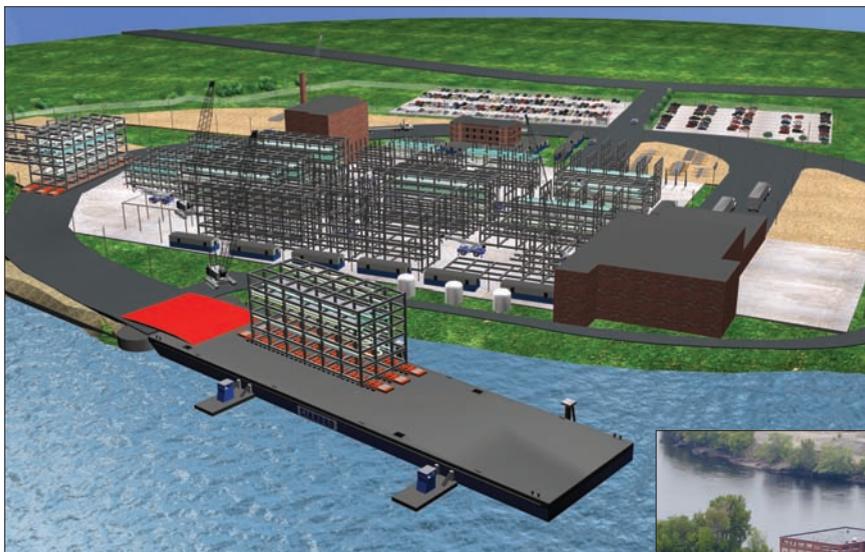


## REDEVELOPMENT

# Cianbro Is Betting on Modules To Tap Industrial Markets



**F**ollowing the success of several recent maritime industrial ventures, a large Maine heavy-civil contractor is planning to develop a modular construction facility for industrial process plants. The move would help preserve skilled trades and professions in the state while reinventing the firm to capitalize on surging global needs.

Pittsfield-based Cianbro officials on June 2 signed a memorandum of understanding with the city of Brewer for the purchase and sale of the former Eastern Fine Paper mill site. Cianbro plans to develop it into a facility where it will fabricate modules weighing in excess of 1,000 tons for industrial plants in North America and abroad.

Once fabrication work begins next year, about 500 welders, pipefitters, millwrights, electricians and engineers will be working on the modules. "There is a demand globally for skilled construction workers," says Pete Vigue, Cianbro president and CEO. "Maine is in an economic transition, moving from a manufacturing to a service economy. In particular, paper mills have shrunk their need for

**▲ Taking Shape.** Old paper mill will be redeveloped into a facility that will build 1,000-ton modules for process plants.

skilled workers, resulting in underemployment and outmigration of our youth." He believes that the project will help the state export its knowledge and skills by bringing projects back to Maine. The Brewer project will assemble structural steel and equipment modules for the pharmaceutical, microchip, petrochemical and power markets.

Cianbro and the city teamed up after a previous developer interested in converting the 40-acre site into a mall and residential complex stepped aside. The 380,000-sq-ft mill has been vacant for several years, and some environmental remediation work has already begun, mostly removing lead- and PCB-contaminated soil. Total remediation cost is estimated at \$7 million, of which Cianbro will pay \$5 million. Mill demolition and redevelopment work should start in November. The work includes building a

new loading pier and bulkhead.

"There were some delicate negotiations between the parties," says Stephen M. Bost, Brewer city manager. "But in the end, a \$60-million mixed-use project became a huge industrial project, which we believe is the best use of the site."

The mill employed over 600 workers in its mid-20th century heyday, but it had been in a state of decline for a number of years, resulting in the layoff of about 240 people when the mill closed its doors in 2004. The city has a population of about 10,000, and the mill traditionally had been the city's largest employer and taxpayer. Many skilled former employees are still in the area but are underemployed.

"This project uses the Penobscot River, which separates Brewer and Bangor, for shipping and will now employ a

skilled labor force in jobs with a future," says Bost.

Cianbro is reinventing itself in Maine by capitalizing on the available labor pool. It ven-

tured from its traditional East Coast heavy-civil projects in 2003, when the firm completed two 12,500-ton semi-submersible oil rigs that were floated from shipyards in Texas and Mississippi. The rig work in Portland involved mating a 5,500-ton deck box and derrick with a pontoon assembly (ENR 7/21/03 p. 22). About 850 people worked on the \$170-million project.

Cianbro also participated in two oil-tanker projects for Conoco Phillips in 2004 in Portland and New Orleans and now is converting two 420-ft-long sulfur tankers into 370-ft-long multiservice supply vessels. "We are gutting and outfitting the ships, plus installing new drive systems, including all new mechanical and electrical systems and accommodations," says Vigue. "Bath Iron Works is our subcontractor.... This is their first commercial project in over 30 years." ■

