

Renovation underway at Milk Specialties Co.

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A major restoration is underway in Carpentersville at Milk Specialties Co., a project owner Tom Roeser says will cost "millions."

Roeser, president and chief executive officer of Otto Engineering, bought the site for "probably more than it's worth" and the renovations began last week.

"It continues the restoration of the tri-city riverfront here," Roeser said of his latest project. "You got East Dundee, West Dundee and Carpentersville and they've got this beautiful riverfront that used to only have old, dilapidated buildings and so I've got an opportunity to fix them up."

The two buildings are across the Fox River from the Otto campus that was extensively renovated in 2012.

Aside from the Carpentersville Dundee Veterinary Hospital and Golden Bag Co., a plastic bag manufacturer, the buildings are vacant, Roeser said. Roeser said his main goal is restoring the buildings to the way they looked when Borden's Milk condensed and packaged milk there around the turn of the century.

That will involve tuck-pointing the exterior, installing new windows and doors, and installing a new roof. Interior work includes fixing utilities and electric work.

Roeser intends to create a green space along the river in front of the buildings, and relocating the parking lot to the rear of the buildings.

The work is scheduled for completion at the end of 2015 and once it's done, Roeser will look for additional tenants.

Roeser's restoration complements the village's overall goal of prioritizing riverfront improvements, Village President Ed Ritter said.

"The Milk Specialties is one of the biggest places along the river that needs to be worked on -- it's in pretty bad shape," Ritter said. "Before (Roeser) took it over it was just kind of like a dumping space."

Riverfront beautification efforts won't be limited to Roeser's efforts.

Carpentersville's village board has set aside \$30,000 to hire a consultant to help improve the village's image and offer ideas on making the most of its riverfront.

In addition to that, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning launched a study on the six-mile riverfront stretch between Carpentersville and Algonquin to identify potential recreational opportunities. The study will include riverfront property in the McHenry County Conservation District and the Kane County Forest Preserve District.

"We're more in the planning stages so that we can qualify for grants to do work along the river," Ritter said. "That's the way of the world. If you don't have some sort of a study, you can't get grants."