

Buildings come down, judicial center goes up

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Two non-historic buildings on King Street in downtown Charleston have been torn down in recent days to make way for Charleston County's planned judicial center off Broad Street.

Also, a non-historic building at 100 Broad St. will be torn down in the next 10 days, said Carl Simmons, Charleston County capital projects director.

The demolition of the buildings, including the former King Street attorneys' office next to Berlin's clothing store, is part of the overall judicial center project.

The office building owned by lawyer and former state Sen. Larry Richter also has been torn down so the county parking garage on Cumberland Street can be expanded to Church Street, Simmons said.

It cost \$57,000 for demolition of the King Street buildings, \$49,000 for the Broad Street office building, and \$7,320 for Richter's former office. SCF Group L.C., of Niagara Falls, N.Y., is the contractor, he said.

Archaeological surveys will be conducted at the sites, Simmons said.

One survey already has turned up remnants of an old wall and foundation next to 8 Courthouse Square. The remnants once were part of a sugar refinery, Simmons said.

The Sugar House, which dated to at least 1785, was owned by Phillip Meyer, who also owned 8 Courthouse Square, according to Jon Poston of the Historic Charleston Foundation.

Construction of the \$53 million judicial center at Broad Street between King and Meeting streets could begin next spring and take about 2 ½ years to complete, Simmons has said.

The 162,000-square-foot, four-story courthouse will be built in the parking lot next to the county parking garage and office building at 2 Courthouse Square.

The project includes moving the historic house at 8 Courthouse Square to 100 Broad St. and demolishing the back half of 98 ½ Broad St., now a French bistro. Preservationists want the county to move the back half of 98 ½ Broad to save it, arguing that it once served as the original 1735 office of Dr. Alexander Garden, a prominent naturalist for whom the gardenia is named. Modern additions have obscured the building's history, however.

Restoration of the historic County Courthouse at Broad and Meeting streets, a project first proposed after Hurricane Hugo in 1989, is still on hold as a result of bids coming in too high last year.

The county is expected to rebid the restoration project this year, Simmons said.