

**Historic Buildings
in the
The Midtown Project Area**

**Architectural/Historical Notes
by
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**Charleston, S.C.
2008**

Introduction and Historical Overview

This study, including historical research and architectural and structural analysis, of historic buildings in the proposed Midtown redevelopment project, was undertaken in behalf of Regent Charleston, LLC, the developer. The project area contains a number of buildings along the east side of King Street, of varying age and historic and architectural importance. Regent Charleston, LLC desire to retain and preserve buildings and portions of buildings which are of historic and architectural value, and to clear from the project site buildings and portions of buildings that are of no such value.

The project area has had layers of historical development. The neighborhood has been occupied since the late eighteenth century, when former plantation lands along the Broad Path (King Street) were subdivided, and current property lines still in large part reflect those early divisions (Figures 1 and 2). The first development followed a typical pattern in which merchants built combined stores and residences with extensive outbuildings, for use as wagon yards. Wagoners from the interior, coming down the King Street Road, stopped at such establishments to exchange country produce for trade goods. Development was aided by the proximity of Spring Street, which led to a bridge across the Ashley River. The wagon trade was eclipsed during the 1820s and '30s by the South Carolina Rail Road, which acquired a right of way through the blocks bounded by King and Meeting streets (Figure 3). The presence of the rail line facilitated industrial development, and in the 1850s George S. Hacker and his partners established a complex including a sawmill, lumber yard and sash and blind factory on King Street, opposite Cannon Street (Figures 7, 8, 9). Along Hacker's Alley (also known as Riker's Lane), small wooden residences were built, perhaps for workers in the Hacker concern (Figure 4). Further redevelopment occurred after the Hacker heirs sold part of their holdings in the 1880s. By the early twentieth century, several banks and a movie theater augmented commercial activities along King Street (Figures 10, 11). Unfortunately, most of the historic buildings in the project area were demolished in the mid-to-late twentieth century.¹

The oldest surviving structure of historic and architectural significance, in the project area, is 562 King Street, which was built ca. 1811. The other buildings selected for historical and structural analysis are 544 King Street, built in 1927; 556 King Street, built in 1887 and remodeled in the 1920s; and 560 King Street, built in 1951. This report has focused on the crucial historic preservation issues involved at each of the selected buildings, and on recommendations for resolution of these issues. The selected buildings are discussed below, in the order of their street addresses.

Crucial issue: The configuration of the 1887 building, despite the 1920s remodeling, is clearly defined by line breaks in the brickwork between the original building and the first extension. Another clue to the footprint of the original building is a floor covering of small octagonal tiles, which was installed in the bank's public lobby. The tile floor is bounded the walls of the building at its outer edges, and a line marking the ghost of the teller counters along its inner edge. The tile floor also terminates at the same point as the line breaks in the brickwork. The developer desires to retain the original 1887 extent of the building, and demolish the additions to the rear of the line breaks. This is problematic as the brick walls of the earliest extension, although not original to 1887, appear to date from the 1920s and therefore can be considered as historic and worthy of retention. The later additions, to the rear of the 1920s extension, are of no historic or architectural value, and can be removed without regret.

Recommendation: Architectural elements of the 1920s remodeling, and the portion of the building dating from the 1920s, should be retained along with the original 1887 building. Any historic materials in the later rear additions (including historic materials of recent introduction) should be salvaged for possible re-use.

560 King Street – The Palace Realty Building T.M.S. 460-08-04-52

This one story concrete block building, with a brick and plate-glass storefront, was built in 1951 by the Palace Realty Company (Figures 12, 13).⁶ The building was initially occupied by a furniture store.

Crucial issue: The piazzas of the ca. 1811 house at 562 King Street were demolished to clear space for the construction of 560 King Street. The building at 560 King Street is considered by this consultant to be of marginal historic and architectural interest, in contrast with the great historical and architectural value of the building at 562 King.

Recommendation: This building of least value can be demolished, as it is not historic, in order to facilitate the rehabilitation of 562 King, the building of ultimate value in the project area.

562 King Street – The Thomas Fleming Building T.M.S. 460-08-04-52

Thomas Fleming, a prosperous merchant, built this handsome three story brick, hip-roofed single house after purchasing the site in 1811. It was built as a store and residence, with a separate two-story brick, gable-roofed kitchen to the rear, and a long, two-story brick outbuilding extending deeply into the large lot. A large wooden stable stood at the east end of the lot, and other wooden outbuildings were built during subsequent decades. Nineteenth century maps (Figures 3, 5) indicate the Fleming establishment was one of several such complexes in the block. The property evidently was occupied by his kinsman Robert Fleming, who operated a wagon yard. Thomas



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City of Charleston
75 Calhoun Street, 3rd Floor
Charleston, SC 29401

Attn: Mr. Eddie Bello, AIA
Urban Design and Preservation Architect

In re: Midtown Development
560 King Street; TMS #460-08-04-052
Demolition Application

Gentlemen,

Reference is made to the packet of Sanborn Maps prepared and submitted under a separate cover, Midtown Development - Sanborn Maps.

This evolution of this property is shown therein.

In recent time, this was a day care facility.

The building appears to date from the early 1950's. The configuration does not match the 1944 Sanborn map; but does match the 1951 map.

It is a simple single story masonry building built immediately next to and, within the porches, of the more stately 562 King.

The primary reason for the demolition request is to allow new construction to compliment the grand building at 562 King Street.

Should you have any questions, please call.

Very truly yours,

Russell A. Rosen, P. E.

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