

Work stopped on house

■ PERMIT PROBLEMS: Acting on neighbor's complaints, the city issued a stop-work order on a job which it says has exceeded what was authorized.

By RON MENCHACA
Of The Post and Courier staff

Preservationists and a neighborhood president were up in arms last week over the gutting of a downtown single home.

The home at 3 Henrietta St. in Mazyck-Wraggborough was nothing more than a structural shell last week after a contractor removed all of its siding, interior walls and chimneys.

"This is a travesty. It's unforgivable," said Mazyck-Wraggborough Neighborhood Association President Vangie Rainsford, who notified city officials after becoming suspicious about the level of work

going on at the house. "They've gutted a 19th-century home."

The city Preservation Office says the house was built about 100 years ago.

The city's Board of Architectural Review approved a work permit on the house on Sept. 8 for "minor repairs, no changes," according to city preservation planner Pamela Pendergrass. She said the repairs were to replace rotted siding.

The BAR must approve any repairs, alterations or demolition of buildings located within the Old and Historic District, regardless of age or condition.

Building Inspections chief Doug Smits said a stop-work notice was posted on the house Oct. 22 after city preservation officials were notified by residents that work on the house was progressing beyond the scope of the permit that was issued.

"It was obvious the work had gone beyond what had been approved," Smits said. "We were told that the contractor removed all of the siding because it was

all rotten."

A second stop-work notice was posted Oct. 26 because the contractor underestimated the cost of the work that he applied to do.

It's not unusual for an owner to undervalue a permit, Smits said.

Scott Quattlebaum, who owns the home and whose company Quattlebaum Development applied for the work permit, said he was renovating the home and was not aware that any stop-work order had been posted there.

"Basically we're just renovating it back to what it was," Quattlebaum said. "It was about to fall over, it was leaning so bad."

"I don't know what that's about," he said of the stop-work order. "I'd have to get with the crew that was working out there."

Quattlebaum declined to say what type

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Staff Photo by Ron Menchaca

City building inspectors say a contractor working on this single home at 3 Henrietta St. (circa 1890-1900) went beyond the scope of the work permit he was issued.

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of work his company was approved to do on the home. "That's really between the city and me," he said.

Robert Gurley with the Preservation Society of Charleston said he looked at the house recently and was disappointed with what he saw. "What I see out there is significant construction being done without BAR approval," he said. "For this to happen points to a lack of adequate enforcement."

Smits said his office has about 17 employees who are authorized to post stop-work orders if they suspect a violation.

Building inspections plans to levy fines for the violations, Smits said.

Quattlebaum must reapply for a permit that fits the work that has already been done. In effect, the process is reversed.

"It's not really the penalty that hurts," Smith said. "It's the fact that the work has been stopped and the delays that causes. That really hits them in the pocket book."