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King St. building demolition to resume

By ROBERT BEHRE
Of The Post and Courier staff

The demolition of 581-583 King St. is about halfway done, and the city has asked the contractor to save significant architectural details.

The demolition really began in September when Hurricane Floyd peeled away its facade and dropped it onto an automobile.

The city looked at the remaining structure, and deemed it enough of a safety hazard that it approved its demolition without sending it before the Board of Architectural Review.

"There's no question there was an immediate threat," said Doug Smits, chief building official.

The demolition done to date has revealed an even older structure — a house that could date from the 1850s — at the rear of the property, said Historic Charleston Foundation spokesman Jonathan Poston.

"We wish that it would be put back — that the house itself could be saved and put back. It shouldn't be removed," he said.

Smits said the city hired a structural engineer to look at the building, and he advised that it was not salvageable. He noted the

building's facade masked the poor condition of the older home.

"Maybe if the back structure had been more visible, it would have been pursued earlier for possible demolition by neglect," he said. "Dating stuff is not necessarily my forte, but the building at the rear was a lot more historically significant than what was visible from the street."

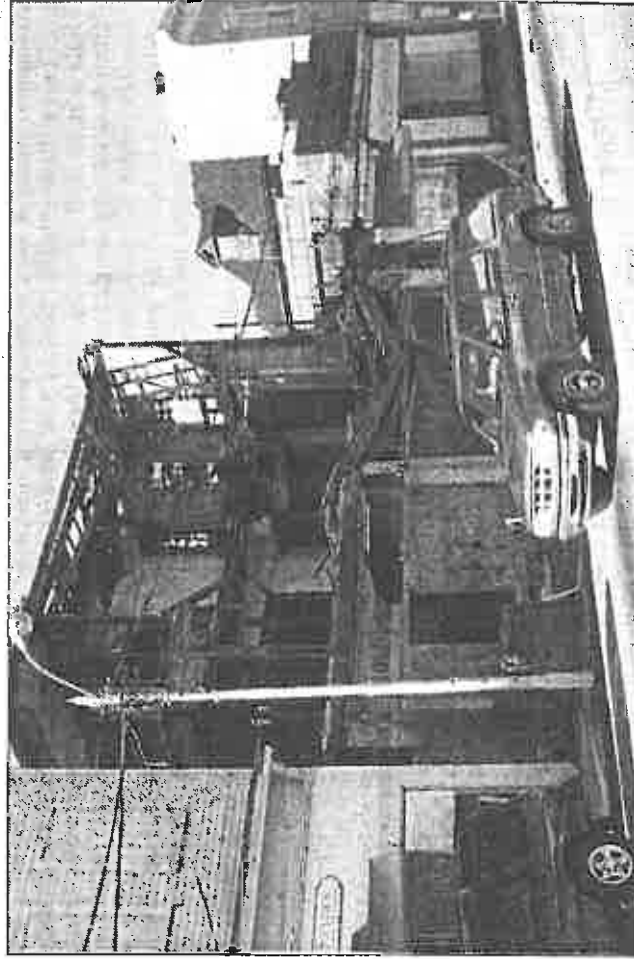
Smits said the owners have a permit to demolish the entire structure, both its new facade and the older house. That work had slowed during the holidays, and he said the city recently made inquiries about when the demolition will resume.

"We're assuming after the holidays, he'll commence again," Smits said. "We're starting to get a little concerned about it. If we feel there is a new threat to the public right of way, we would step in again."

Smits said the property would be fenced off once the demolition work is completed, but he was unsure of any redevelopment plans.

The building's owner referred questions to her attorney, who could not be reached for comment last week.

Robert Behre covers city government. He may be contacted at 937-5549 or at rbehre@postandcourier.com.



Staff Photo by Thurston Hatcher

A city building official said the owners of 581-583 King have a permit to demolish the structure. Although work slowed during the holidays, he said the city recently made inquiries about when demolition will resume.

581-583 King

\$80M Midtown project underway

BY WARREN L. WISE
wwise@postandcourier.com

Midtown is the new buzz word for redevelopment in downtown Charleston. The long-awaited \$80 million hotel and retail complex at the corner of King and Spring streets officially broke ground Tuesday with officials hailing it as the latest pillar in the redevelopment of a once-blighted part of peninsular Charleston.

Representatives of Regent Partners of Atlanta and Charleston-based CC&T Real Estate Services along with other dignitaries kicked off the upper King Street redevelopment project on 2 1/2 acres of mostly abandoned and vacant property.

The project will include a 10-story, dual-branded Hyatt House and Hyatt Place hotel with 304 guest rooms, retail shops and a seven-story, 403-vehicle parking deck, which the city will eventually own. All told, Midtown will include four new structures and two renovated buildings for a total of 423,000 square feet.

"We are excited about this groundbreaking, but we look forward to its

Online

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completion," said Robert Clement of CC&T, a partner in the project with Atlanta-based Regent. "We haven't made any money yet."

Reid Freeman of Regent said, "This isn't the conclusion. This is a start," referring to the remake of upper King Street.

"You will probably see several new stores popping up around here," said David Allman, also of Regent.

Allman added that the Midtown project hasn't landed any retailers yet because they wanted to get construction started first.

Charleston Mayor Joe Riley predicted the redevelopment will do for upper King what Charleston Place did for lower King when it opened in 1986.

"In building and rebuilding a great



BRAD NETTLES/STAFF

Construction crews have removed the back portion of 562 King St. and started putting in pilings for the Charleston Midtown project.

city, it's important there are developers who will join with the city in achieving a higher vision," Riley said. "The rebuilding of the American city is a very complicated and challenging thing. You are repairing an injured ecosystem."

Developers of a vacant lot across from the site are watching the Midtown project unfold with keen interest.

Trey Sedalik of Prospect Real Estate Partners and business partner Daniel James plan to build a 54-room boutique hotel at 583 King St.

"Every pile they drive increases our property value," James said at the Midtown construction site Tuesday. Midtown developers expect construction to be completed by spring 2015.

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