Facing the wrecking ball: Canton Inn comes down

Kelly Byer

CANTON – The city began demolishing the notorious Canton Inn on Monday to make way for future development.

The Canton Community Improvement Corporation (CCIC), the city's economic development organization, purchased the hotel in July in partnership with Canton For All People, a community development corporation formed by Crossroads United Methodist Church.

"The CCIC purchased the property for the purpose of closing and demolishing it due to decades-old problems of crime, drug activity and other nuisance conditions," the city said in a prepared statement. "The vacant land will be land-banked and held for future development in combination with adjacent land, and used for neighborhood housing and retail."

The Canton Inn closed and was boarded up while the purchase was pending last year. Canton For All People helped negotiate the purchase deal and rehouse the hotel’s residents.

Mayor Thomas Bernabei said in a news release that the demolition resolves "decades of frustration" with the nuisance property.

"We look forward to development of the property for housing and retail, as proposed in the City’s comprehensive plan for the area," he said. "We
thank our neighborhood development partner, Canton For All People, for its ongoing leadership and assistance in rebuilding the Shorb area.”

Don Ackerman, executive director of Canton For All People, said the dream is to form a community coalition to build an affordable apartment complex at the site. He anticipates the complex to offer fitness amenities, employment training, and commercial space for new businesses.

"Today was the first step in, ultimately, what is a long journey that hopefully will bring about something new, something exciting, and bring more life back to that section of the neighborhood," Ackerman said.

Reach Kelly at 330-580-8323 or kelly.byer@cantonrep.com On Twitter: @kbyerREP