



**Lifting the Battery**  
City wants input on plans for renovation at Low Battery, White Point Garden.  
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**Commercial surge on Spruill Avenue**  
New construction, building renovations ongoing along North Charleston corridor.  
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**Rising tide of cargo**  
S.C. State Ports Authority saw a 10% increase in container volume for the fiscal year. **Page 6**

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## Report outlines infrastructure priorities amid growth

By Liz Segrist  
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Hours lost to commuting on congested roadways, sitting on roads blocked by trains and navigating streets flooded from rain and high tides are all part of a typical drive for many Lowcountry residents.

The region's population grows daily with

industry continuing to add jobs, families moving into residential housing, and tourists flocking to Charleston's downtown and the area's beaches.

While the Lowcountry's economic successes rise, its infrastructure woes worsen, said Bryan Derreberry, president and CEO of the Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce.

Business leaders consistently rank inadequate transportation options and highway

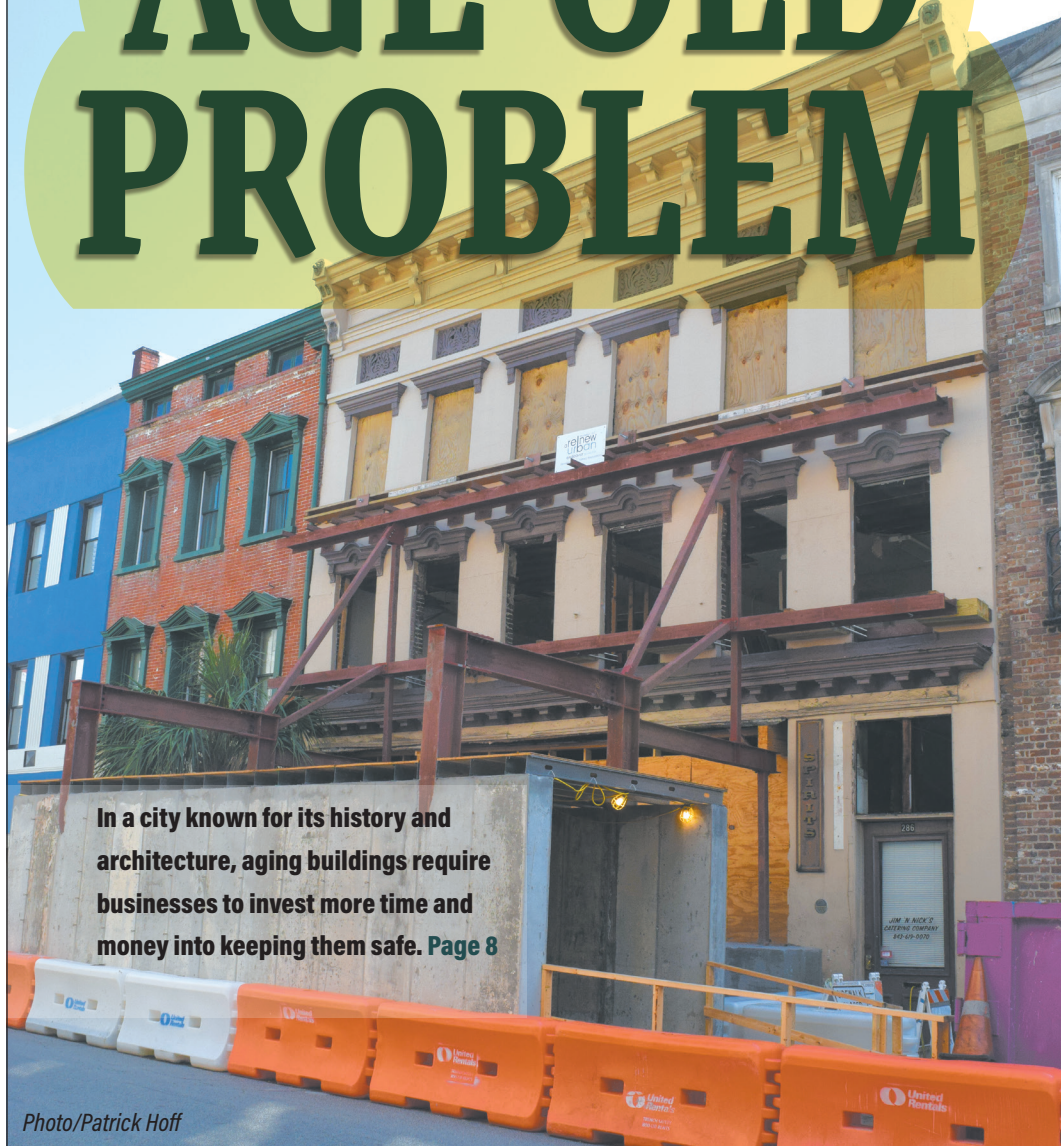
capacity as top concerns, along with affordable housing and the search for skilled workers.

Derreberry said the Lowcountry's growth will only accelerate, requiring "wise investment choices" in the region's transportation network.

"All these things are important for the ability of our community to continue to scale to

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## AGE-OLD PROBLEM



In a city known for its history and architecture, aging buildings require businesses to invest more time and money into keeping them safe. **Page 8**

Photo/Patrick Hoff

## Uncertainty lingers for hospitals after health care debate

By Patrick Hoff  
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The months of debate and uncertainty over whether Republicans would be able to repeal the Affordable Care Act seem to be over, but hospitals and doctors are still concerned about what comes next from Washington regarding health care.

Schipp Ames, executive director of communications and marketing for the S.C. Hospital Association, said the intensity at S.C. hospitals has lessened a bit since the health care bill failed, but he said seeing it as a relief was "painting it a little too positively."

"It's been such a resilient bill, and we think that the (Trump) administration and Congress are so dedicated to this issue that we think it's something that we are going to be continuing to work on and definitely something that we'll be continuing to watch very closely," Ames said.

Dr. Todd Shuman, chief physician officer at Roper St. Francis, said that although the debate has settled in Washington for now, there's still a lot of uncertainty in health care, especially around cost.

"We have the same two pressures upon us," he said. "We have a downward pressure in

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## CHARLESTON UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Who is building what in the Charleston area?  
Projects, companies, prices, projected timelines, photos and stories.

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# Aging architecture brings challenges for businesses

By Patrick Hoff  
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In October, the local owner of Nick's on King Street noticed some trim above the door had popped off the building's facade. He called the building owner, who lives in Atlanta, and he sent a company to repair it.

The company designed a support structure that was screwed into the 200-year-old brick facade on the third floor of 288 King St. The work was finished in December.

"(They) secured it, I think we're good," John Haire, the local owner of the Jim 'N Nick's chain, said of the situation.

Then, on a Friday afternoon at the end of March, Haire noticed more "irregularities" in the same spot — the building had begun to bulge out toward the street. The city of Charleston got involved, and the following Monday, the diagnosis came down: "This building has to be evacuated immediately," Haire said. The restaurant was forced to leave almost everything behind.

Nick's on King isn't the first business to have issues with aging architecture in Charleston, nor would it be the last. In early July, Lagunitas announced it was closing its brewery and taproom at 161 East Bay St. indefinitely to do repairs on the building after less than a year of occupancy.

Karen Hamilton, spokeswoman for Lagunitas, said this is the first time the company has owned a historic building, "so we were learning as we went."

"And from what I've read now, this is not unusual in the downtown Charleston area, in the historic area. So ... it wasn't a unique thing, then. This was kind of like how it goes."

Andy Meihaus, owner of Renew Urban Charleston, the contractor that's been involved with the Nick's on King Street building since October, said buildings deteriorating is pretty common in Charleston.

"If you're from 1830, you're probably getting tired," he said. "So things just get tired. These old buildings get tired."

The problem at 288 King St., Meihaus said, is that the original supports of the building are failing, causing the facade to cave out toward the street, and the support structure implemented in October, called a K-beam with waler, was not enough to hold it long term. The system is still in place, but it had become stressed as the building continued to deteriorate.

Renew Urban shored up the building and saved the facade with a system of 135,000 pounds of concrete and steel that anchor the building to the street. The system, designed by Mark Dillon of ADC Engineering, is one Meihaus said he doesn't think Charleston has ever seen.



Renew Urban Charleston installed a K-beam with waler on the third floor of 288 King St. last fall to secure the facade. The system ultimately was not enough to prevent further deterioration. (Photo/Patrick Hoff)

The exterior of the building still protrudes toward the street, but Meihaus said that gives an illusion that things are worse than they really are at this point.

"Now that it's secured and arrested, it's totally fine," he said.

Meihaus predicted that the company would be able to remove the exterior structure within four to six months of starting work on the building, after they're able to secure a concrete wall to the current facade.

He said, though, that Renew Urban is still working through all of the issues with the building. They still don't know a lot, he said, because the company is waiting for Nick's to remove their things, including the kitchen equipment and restaurant furniture.

"Once they remove their stuff, we're going to do a complete demo of the building to really get an understanding of everything," Meihaus said. "And then the building owner has committed to completely renovating the space."

Meihaus said he's planning for the project to take two years, but that could depend on what they find.

Hamilton also said she is unsure how much work will be required on Lagunitas; more things that need repair continue to be found as workers look into the building.

"I mean, the list is too long to even go into, and it continues to be built right now," Hamilton said.

Steve Palmer, owner of The Indigo Road Restaurant Group, said his company has developed a lot of old buildings. He said that going into the development,

you sometimes find more homework that needs to be done.

"You can't want to develop in these beautiful, old 1800s-era buildings and not understand that there's going to be problems, there's going to be surprises," he said.

However, with patience and commitment, Palmer added, "what you end up with is just really, really beautiful."

## 'A great deal of work'

David Howard, president of The Neighborhood Dining Group, said the appeal of the old buildings is a significant factor in the success of many restaurants in Charleston, but he said proper care has to be taken of the structures.

"I just know that it's a commitment, certainly on my part, to maintain these properties and the part to fund the upkeep," Howard said. "It's something that we take great pride in, but it's also a great deal of work and a commitment, and not everybody would look at it the same."

The Neighborhood Dining Group operates McCrady's Tavern at 2 Unity Alley, built before the American Revolution. The building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.

Howard said owning such an old building means committing to constant repairs and maintenance every month "to keep it in first-class condition."

"We don't have any structural issues, it's just continued issues with rain and weather and leaks, and it's just an old building, and it has a big personality, and

it needs to be nurtured at all times," he said.

Josh Martin, senior adviser to Charleston Mayor John Tecklenburg, said the city is keeping an eye on these issues and having discussions about ways to keep buildings safer as the city ages. Currently, the city usually gets involved with building deterioration on a case-by-case basis.

"It's a fairly complex situation. ... We don't have a mechanism by which we go by or require very comprehensive structural assessments of buildings on an annual basis, per se," he said.

Typically, a building owner will contact the city, which will then hire an independent structural engineer to assess the structure and create a mitigation plan to shore up the building, often requiring tenants to move out, at least temporarily.

Although building owners see building deterioration as a problem, Martin said most property owners in the city properly maintain their buildings, so it isn't common that the city has to get involved with mitigation.

"The people that are buying these properties are spending the money on the right type of contractors and assessments and those types of things to have the upkeep done on the buildings," he said.

If necessary, Charleston has a demolition-by-neglect ordinance, which the city can use to demolish a building that has become unsafe; Martin said those cases are much rarer now than they were in the 1980s and 1990s.


Howard said people who reside in an old building "have a responsibility to maintain it at a high standard and a safe standard."

"It is not for the meek or the undercapitalized because it's time-consuming as well," Howard added.

"If you're going to be a tenant in these buildings, there comes with risk that one day that you just don't know what the integrity of the building is going to be, and then, boom, it happens to you," Meihaus said. "It's (repair is) better than people getting killed."

Haire said he holds no ill will toward the city of Charleston for the assessment of the Nick's building, saying their decision was "quick, but it was fair."

"Anyone could take the approach of 'I'm losing my business, I'm going to blame somebody,' but the building was built in the 1820s," he added. "Geez. ... 200-year-old buildings probably need some work."

Haire said Jim 'N Nick's is hoping to return downtown at some point, but he said the eatery won't be returning to the old building after it is renovated. 

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