

Crane helps secure Biemiller and Barnes buildings after storm

Roads expected to reopen in coming days

August 11, 2018 - By ANDY OURIEL, Sandusky Register



Register photo/ANDY OURIEL

A crane removes loose and dislodged roofing materials Friday from the Biemiller Building in downtown Sandusky. Damage occurred after last month's thunderstorm, severely damaging this structure and two neighboring buildings as well.

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Closed for more than two weeks now, Sandusky officials need at least "a few more days" before they can reopen a pair of roadways situated between three severely compromised structures in

downtown.

Cleanup efforts picked back up Friday morning, when a crane, operated by Tusing Builders & Roofing workers, removed portions of a damaged roof atop the Biemiller Building.

All work revolved around securing and stabilizing the building so no other loose or dislodged materials fall three stories onto the ground. "It could be a hazard if other strong winds came along," building owner Bob Hare said. "Work that remains includes bracing the remaining roof structure and third-floor walls. Some of that will be completed this weekend, and the balance early next week."

Officials don't feel comfortable with vehicular traffic passing by this building, either on East Water Street or East Shoreline Drive by Schade-Mylander Plaza, until crews complete these tasks. "Everyone involved wants to see these streets reopened," said city commissioner Dick Brady, who believes these roads could reopen by Friday, Aug. 17. "I have spoken to several of the business owners, and not one of them is willing to jeopardize the safety of their customers or a resident," Brady said. "Everyone involved places a higher value on safety than they do on commerce."

The storm

The situation circles back to July 26, when straight line winds topping out at 60 mph mangled three adjacent structures — the Biemiller, Barnes and Reber buildings — across from Daly's Pub.

Despite roofs, siding and other brick materials fiercely falling from a trio of three story-tall structures, which wrecked cars and made these buildings uninhabitable for now,

nobody in this densely populated area experienced any injuries. Since then, each property owner has briefed city manager Eric Wobser, providing somewhat-uplifting progress reports. “They are going to do what they can to try to save them all,” Wobser said. “The goal is to preserve the two that are in the worse shape (Biemiller and Barnes). The third one, the Reber, will be OK.”

Businesses occupying the Barnes and Reber buildings have closed or temporarily relocated as cleanup efforts continue.

Regarding the vacant Biemiller Building, owned by private investment group Renaissance Too, its status as a future home for Lake Erie Shores & Islands, Erie County’s tourism bureau, remains unknown at this time. “We are working with the city to assess the damage and determine if the Biemiller Building is repairable,” said Hare, a partner with Renaissance Too. “We are working hard to make those determinations as quickly as possible. Until we can answer that, the path forward is hard to predict.”