

SANDUSKY | DOWNTOWN - Cooke future uncertain

By ANDY OURIEL, ouriel@sanduskyregister.com, June 20, 2019



Renovation work at the Cooke Building in downtown stopped earlier this month after project developers ran into unexpected complications.

SANDUSKY

Questions recently tossed back and forth between community members have cast a dark shadow over the Cooke Building in downtown Sandusky. If they're not verbatim, they do sound something similar to this: "What's going on with the Cooke Building?" "Did the owners pull out of the

project altogether? "Will the building ever be salvaged?" Several people asked Register staff members these very questions, reaching out to the newspaper in hopes of obtaining some clarity. Staff members sent a message last week to project developers and spouses Rick and Meghan Hogrefe.

Responding Tuesday night, the Hogrefes provided a statement explaining the circumstances and complications:

- The overview: "As can be expected, renovation and construction of a 140-year-old building brings a litany of conditions, and the Cooke Building is no exception. The design and construction team identified many deficiencies in the building prior to the start of construction, which added significant costs to the renovation process."

- The complications: "Further discoveries of damage and deterioration have continued to occur through the renovation and construction phase of the project beyond what was expected, all of which are suspected to be a result of decades of neglect and lack of maintenance of the building."

- The specifics: "These conditions are too numerous to list in detail but include material problems with basement support, floor joists, building supports, support for the front-end corner of the building, support beams and the entire back wall of the building. Some of these items require a total rebuild or complete replacement. More potential problems on the second and third floors are being reviewed presently."

- The status: "Due to these newly discovered complications, work on the project has been terminated while all of the involved parties ascertain the new scope of the work required and next steps moving forward."

- The project's future: "The Cooke Building, LLC and its team are exploring a number of potential plans and options at this time, and an update will be provided when a solution is reached. We would like to thank the community for its understanding and support as we work through this process, which is being given the utmost attention and consideration. Together with the support of everyone in the city, we will continue to participate in and work toward making Sandusky and the surrounding area a great place to live, work and play."

Context on the Cooke Complex - The Cooke Building is one of two major neighboring entities within the Cooke Complex. The other: The Marketplace at Cooke. The Marketplace, an indoor mall filled with entrepreneurs selling food, retail and more, debuted in April.

Regarding the Cooke Building, this section will offer a mix of entertainment, office space and additional retail components complementing Marketplace offerings.

The Hogrefes initially wanted to open the Cooke Building by next year. But, with the new information presented, it's unlikely it'll open anytime soon.

Additionally, the Cooke Complex's previous estimate of \$10.5 million will no doubt increase because of the unexpected construction complications they've run into with this project.