

Cooke Building could be razed



By MATT WESTERHOLD 8/23/2019 Sandusky Register

SANDUSKY

Too far gone - That's the determination made by an engineer Rick and Meghan Hogrefe hired to survey the Cooke Building at Columbus Avenue and Market Street, the same conclusion about its structural integrity a city hired engineer reached. "It's a combination of bad construction and neglect," Sandusky ex officio Mayor Dennis Murray said. "It didn't have good bones to begin with and it wasn't taken care of over the years."

The Hogrefes, who've invested millions of dollars renovating properties in downtown Sandusky and other parts of the city, bought the building and planned to renovate it, making it a part of their Marketplace at Cooke mall to the east of the building on Market Street, which opened earlier this year.

But the more their contractor worked on it the more they began to realize the building might not be able to be saved. "When your contractor — the guys you're paying — are telling you it's not going to work, you have to take another look," Hogrefe said.

The Hogrefes will apply for a demolition permit with the city's Landmark Commission next month. If it's granted they will move swiftly to bring the old building down and start construction on a new one. "We want to get it down as quickly as possible — before winter — first, so we can get that sidewalk opened back up, and also to get an early start on a new building," said Rick Hogrefe.

The sidewalk around the building has been closed for months for safety reasons when parts of the structure broke off and fell to the ground.

New construction at the site could cost from \$4 million to \$6 million, he said, and will be designed to fit with the historic architecture of the downtown block. The Cooke Building — named after Jay Cooke, the Civil War financier and businessman who was born in Sandusky — has stood at the corner since the mid-1800s.

The new building will likely offer retail on the first floor to complement the Marketplace at Cooke, Hogrefe said.