



AFTER THE FIRE

JANUARY 25, 2008

AT A GLANCE 1

Brett Summers bought the burned-out property on Race Street. He and the city have reached an agreement that will, when finalized, vacate a demolition order. He will present a detailed plan for work on the building to the City Council at 7 p.m., Jan. 28.

2

The city's Department of Economic Development is bringing several top state officials into town on Monday for meetings with civic leaders, including Cambridge Main Street, and a tour of the fire site.

3

Main Street is continuing to accept contributions to the Fire Restoration Fund, which will help those affected by the fire and its aftermath. See red box below for details.

THE LATEST NEWS

FACADE WILL BE SAVED!

Local developer Brett Summers buys Race Street property



Developer Brett Summers (right) has negotiated to buy the property at 444-448 Race Street.

Now that the building destroyed in a January 15 fire is in the hands of a local owner committed to historic preservation, the building's facade should be safe from demolition while expert engineers develop a plan to try and stabilize the facade, protect public safety, and reopen the 400 block of Race Street as soon as possible.

High Street resident Brett Summers purchased the building at 444-448 Race Street from its absentee owner, Young Hwang of Florida, on January 23. The deal was completed just a few hours after hundreds of people gathered for a downtown rally where local leaders, state officials, and preservation experts spoke passionately about the critical importance of trying to save the facade so as to better preserve the historic character and beauty of downtown Cambridge.

"A turning point for downtown Cambridge"

"I believe that this is a turning point for downtown Cambridge," says Dave Harp, president of Cambridge Main Street. "This fire was a terrible tragedy, and we all wish it had never happened.

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HOW TO HELP

BE INFORMED:

Come to the City Council meeting 7 p.m., Jan. 28, when Brett Summers, new owner of the Race Street property, will share plans for stabilizing the facade and rebuilding. Also check the Main Street website at www.cambridgemainstreet.com for updates.

SHOP DOWNTOWN:

Between smoke damage and the street closure, the aftermath of the fire has made it tough on downtown businesses. Please support our merchants—shop and dine downtown!

DONATE:

Cambridge Main Street has established a fund to help post-fire recovery. Mail your check, made out to Cambridge Main Street (write "Fire Restoration Fund" in the memo line) to The Cator House, 411 Muse Street, Cambridge, MD 21613. Contributions are tax-deductible. Also, mark your calendar for a fundraiser Feb. 15 at Cambridge Grill featuring an auction and live music from Boister. For more on that event or to donate auction items, contact Lisa Salvatore at salshope@com-cast.net. \$15 tickets are available at the Grill and Pear Tree South.

GET INVOLVED:

Cambridge Main Street needs your help now more than ever. Let's keep the momentum going! E-mail office@cambridgemainstreet.com or call 443.521.7560 to volunteer or to become a member.

POST-FIRE RALLY



Thanks for rallying for downtown!

Thanks to the more than 200 people who joined Cambridge Main Street downtown January 23 to thank emergency personnel, to lend your support to downtown, and to cheer, wave signs, and exchange hugs with friends, neighbors, and downtown merchants. Here's what we accomplished:

We thanked the people who made all the difference—the firefighters, EMS, and police. The governor's office presented a citation to "the heroes of Cambridge." And indeed they are.

We signed petitions—more than 200 signatures were collected to encourage city officials to stop the emergency demolition order that would mean an immediate end to the facade of the three-story building at 444-448 Race Street.

We got attention—On hand at the rally were reporters from the *Baltimore Sun*, WBOC-TV, WMDT-TV, BCC-TV, the *Daily Banner*, and the *Star-Democrat*. Why were they there? Because Cambridge matters.

We gave from our hearts, we gave from our pockets. Rally-goers donated checks, dollars, coins to the Fire Restoration Fund, which has now topped \$2,500, including more than \$1,350 donated by the Dorchester County Chamber of Commerce. See red box at left for details on how you can make a donation.

What did they say? See page 2 for some of the most moving quotes at the rally.

Brett Summers buys Race Street property

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But once it did, it presented our city with a test: Do we really believe in historic preservation as a way to revitalize our downtown? We're passing that test here, and we're doing it while under duress in a very complex situation. I think that promises great things for Cambridge down the road."

Much work remains to be done. Preliminary inspections indicate there's an excellent chance the facade can be saved. The engineering firm of Baker, Ingram & Associates is developing a stabilization plan. That work is being done through an emergency \$5,000 grant Cambridge Main Street obtained through Preservation Maryland. Additional grant applications to state agencies totaling nearly \$300,000 have been submitted to the state in order to help pay for the actual work of stabilization.

In addition, negotiations are under way between the new property owner and the city in an effort to remove the emergency demolition order issued by the Department of Public Works. At the January 23 rally, more than 200 people signed a petition urging the city to remove that order and allow the stabilization work to continue.

"Outpouring of support"

"The outpouring of support for this effort from the community has been absolutely incredible," says Liddy Garcia-Buñuel, executive director of Cambridge Main Street. "The people in this town truly understand that the best way to a more vibrant and prosperous downtown is through preservation and restoration."

Summers, a member of Cambridge Main Street's board, is a staunch advocate for historic renovation. Late last year, his NOVO Development completed the restoration of the old McCrory's building at 450 Race Street. That building now houses seven apartments; plans call for a new restaurant and a new art gallery to go in the building as well. In addition, NOVO is transforming the building at 501 Poplar Street into a planned salon and spa to be operated by Elizabeth Miskell of Avé Studios.

"This building is just so important to our downtown streetscape and its historic feel," Summers said. "We've got to do everything we can to save it, and NOVO Development is eager to step up here and get it done the right way."

"Brett has been working tirelessly on this issue ever since the fire," Garcia-Buñuel said. "Once again, he's really shown his commitment to downtown by making an investment in this vision that so many of us here in Cambridge have for downtown's future. Everyone who cares about this stuff should take a minute to say thanks to him when they get a chance."

POST-FIRE RALLY



Rally-goers (left); Liddy Garcia-Buñuel and Dave Harp, Main Street leaders who organized the rally (right).

"How can Cambridge, which has endured so much in its long history, survive yet another setback? Well, I can tell you that I have seen the outpouring of support for the people affected by this tragedy. I have seen the resilience of a town that looks adversity in the face with quiet determination. I have witnessed the mobilization of ordinary citizens, and business owners, and everyday working men and women who see in this tragedy a common cause to rally around."

—CHAD MALKUS, incoming board president, Cambridge Main Street

"I remember the fire on Pine Street [in 1967] when 25 businesses on both sides of the street were destroyed. After the fire. . . there was nothing to remind me what it used to be. When I look down [Race Street] today, I see an opportunity to preserve some history—the facade."

—GIL CEPHAS, Cambridge City Councilman

"Look back where we were five years ago and see where we've come. We've come a long way. . . I don't want to lose the history in the building or see the process to rebuild held up. We need to move forward and keep intact what we have on Race Street."

—RICKY TRAVERS, Dorchester County councilman, owner of Simmons Center Market on Race Street, volunteer firefighter

"It's wonderful to be part of this downtown. Last week's fire is a comma, an opportunity to refocus our business. For those who thought you might want to support downtown, this is a great time to do it. . . Let's continue to make sure downtown keeps its historic charm."

—TERRI EASTER, owner of Maris Elaine Gallery on Race Street

ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER:

This update is brought to you by Cambridge Main Street, a 501c3 organization dedicated to revitalizing downtown Cambridge. Contact Liddy Garcia-Buñuel, Executive Director, at office@cambridgemainstreet.com or 443.521.7560.

For the latest news about downtown Cambridge, go to www.cambridgemainstreet.com.