

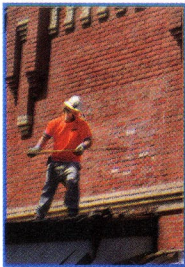
Rebirth of Railroad Square

By Graham Haworth

The historic Railroad Square building at 1880 Santa Barbara Ave. has sat silently since it was severely damaged by a fire Nov. 11, 2002. With the recent granting of several building permits, work to strengthen and remodel the main building is under way, as is the demolition of two annexes built after the main building's original 1912 construction.

"We're finally entering the first phase, which includes seismic retrofitting of the Railroad Square building and the demolition of the two wooden lean-to structures to its north and south," architect George Garcia says. "The demolition should take about two months, while the seismic retrofit will take four to six months."

The Railroad Square



building is one of the most recognizable and historic structures along Santa Barbara Avenue, according to a 2007 Architectural Review Commission staff report. The rehabilitation and seismic retrofit will retain most of the character-defining features, including its brick walls, decorative parapets, arched windows, exposed heavy brick and timber framing and wood window frames. The board-

walk-style walkways in front of the building will also be rebuilt.

Permits for the second phase are anticipated later this summer, Garcia says. The second phase involves the construction of the new annex buildings, which when finished will house retail, office and residential space. Garcia estimates the construction will last between 14 to 16 months.

Garcia says his office has been receiving many calls about what's happening at the Railroad Square site. In response, look for a large project sign on the property soon. Garcia Architecture and Design is also working on a Web site, www.railroadsquare.info, which will contain details and updates on the project. The Web site should be up in a couple of weeks, Garcia says. ♣