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BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

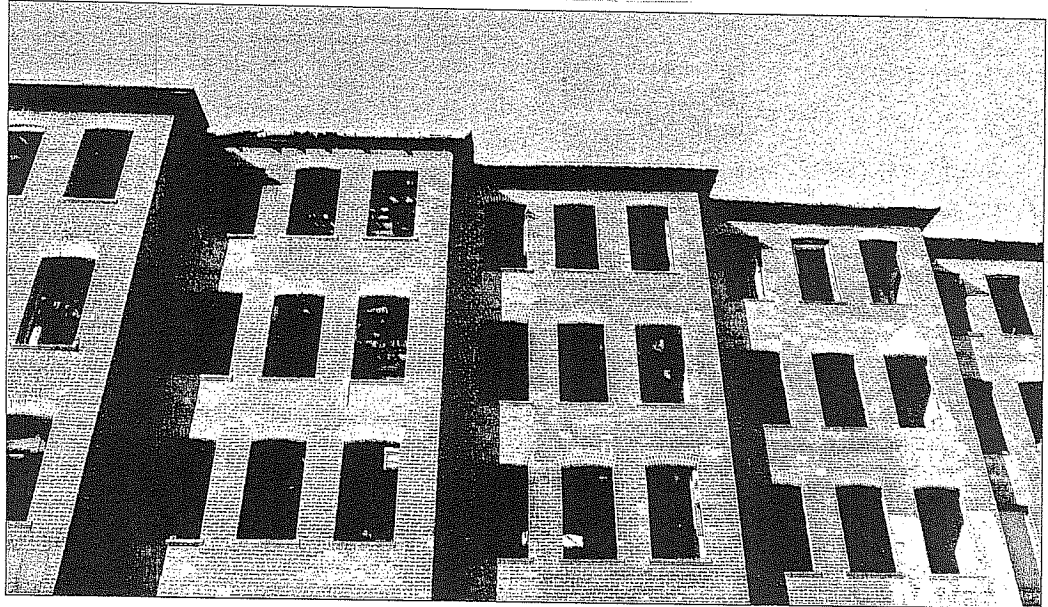
East Main Mews hoping to breathe life back into Bridgeport's East Side

By ROB VARNON
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A cold wind blew through the long-abandoned building, rustling the plastic tarp hanging over a gap in the wall of the room in which dignitaries discussed a \$5.3 million project.

Angie Staltaro and Erma Turpin listened as the mayor, developers and government employees talked about returning the six old buildings at 588-612 East Main St., Bridgeport, to their former use as apartments and retail shops.

► Please see MEWS on E2



Phil Noel/Connecticut Post

East Main Street Mews, which is made up of six buildings at 588-612 East Main St., Bridgeport, is being redeveloped into apartments and retail space.

Mews will feature 1-, 2- and 3-bedroom apartments

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The buildings, now called East Main Mews, have stood empty for more than a decade, leaving a huge hole in the fabric of the neighborhood.

"I used to come here," said Staltaro, a lifelong resident of the East Side. "A lot of decisions for the whole neighborhood were made here."

She said the buildings had been home to a grocery store and that the owner used to allow people to hold meetings in one of them. The upper stories were apartments, Staltaro said, and there were several other stores on the ground floor.

She and Turpin said they are pleased the Mews is being restored. Turpin said old buildings too often are torn down and replaced with new construction, which is not as sturdy.

Restoring the Mews would certainly help a neighborhood that has seen better days.

A block down the street,

there are five empty stores dispersed among the barbershop and hairstylist, a party supply store, shipping business and gas station. Down a side street, a building on Booth Street is boarded up.

Victor Naar, one of the principals of E/N Properties, said he knows how vital the Mews is to the neighborhood. E/N owns the property and is the co-developer on the project with Regan Development Corp. of New York.

The developers held a groundbreaking ceremony in the building, which is under renovation. The units will be available for occupancy this summer.

Naar said neighborhood residents continually ask him what is happening with the building — now he can say it is moving forward.

Mayor John M. Fabrizi thanked Naar and partner Jason Epstein for their work in the city. The two moved to the area after working in Westch-

ester County, N.Y.

"These two guys have done a lot to move this city," Fabrizi said.

After the event, Epstein said the company manages about 80 housing units on the East Side. The company is also turning the Professional Building at 881 Lafayette Blvd. into 40 condominiums and working on a project to create 15 affordable town houses in the Hollow.

Naar and Epstein said the Mews project had slowed because they needed tax credits to help fund it.

That's where Regan Development came in.

Ken Regan, co-owner of Regan Development, said his firm specializes in building affordable housing and securing tax credits. He said that for every \$1 in government funding, the company can typically leverage \$10 from private sources.

The Mews project was no different, as it relies on a mix of tax credits and private

loans, including some from Bank of America.

But Regan said this project is special because it will provide housing to working-class people who are being priced out of the market.

The Mews will feature one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments, 15 of which will be rented based on income limits. The five remaining apartments will be rented at market value.

Income for one-person households cannot exceed \$33,540 a year and \$55,620 for six-person households.

A one-bedroom unit will cost \$257 to \$700 a month and a three-bedroom unit will cost up to \$1,081. Tenants must pay utility costs.

People interested in applying to live in the Mews should call Regan Development, which will mail applications. (The Mews is a construction site and not open to the public.) To contact Regan, call (914) 693-3011.