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## Work begins on historic Stearns Tavern in Worcester before move



The former Stearns Tavern at 651 Park Ave., Worcester, will be moved to a city-owned lot off Mill Street. T&G File Photo/Steve Lanava



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WORCESTER - Selective demolition work is underway to prepare the historic Stearns Tavern for its move from Webster Square to its planned new home at the site of the former Coes Knife factory building on Mill Street.

A crew from Ricciardi Bros. Inc. of Worcester Monday began demolition work on the interior of an addition that was built to Stearns Tavern in 1974, when it was home to a bank.

The plan is to separate the addition from the historic portion of the building before the tavern is sent on its [half-mile trek to its new home](#), according to Philip J. Niddrie, who spends part of his time at City Hall as special projects coordinator in the city manager's office.

He said none of the building's historical features will be affected by the demolition work. Mr. Niddrie said Ricciardi Bros. is donating its time and labor for the project.

James Ricciardi said the selective demolition work will be done in two phases.

The first phase, which will take about a week, involves gutting the interior of the addition, disconnecting utilities to the building and disposing of the demolition waste.

He said the second phase will involve separating the addition from the main building.

"We're basically getting everything all ready now, so before the building is moved we can come in and do the separation," Mr. Ricciardi said.

Bruce Roy of Roy Landscaping Construction has offered his services free of charge for disposal of the demolition materials.

Mr. Ricciardi said when he heard about the Stearns Tavern project, he wanted to get involved.

"I've done a few historical restoration projects before and I liked it," he said. "I saw this as an opportunity to help out the city a little bit. We want to do our share for the community, and this is a great time for us to do it."

Stearns Tavern, located at 651 Park Ave., is one of the oldest structures in the city, and narrowly avoided a date with the wrecking ball last year.

Built in 1812, the vacant two-story building, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is owned by Preservation Worcester. The nonprofit is maintaining the building until it is moved to the Coes Pond site.

At Coes Pond, the city plans to create a four-season, multi-generational park and universally accessible playground. Once the building is moved, the city will take over its ownership.

When its last tenant, Bank of America, vacated the Stearns Tavern building in May 2013, ownership reverted to Salloom Realty Corp., which owns the land the building sits on.

The owner sought permission to raze the building in 2014, but the Historical Commission refused to grant a waiver to the one-year demolition delay ordinance for historic structures.

The city then reached an agreement with Preservation Worcester to relocate the tavern and eventually have the [Seven Hills Foundation occupy the first floor](#) of the building, where it will operate a cafe and other programs.

The city has agreed to spend [\\$150,000 in federal Community Development Block Grant](#) money to move the two-story building.

Because of the cost involved in moving the building, getting the new site ready and preparing the Stearns Tavern for the move, the city has had to rely on the generosity of companies donating their services.

Mr. Niddrie said the amount of pro-bono work and in-kind services exceeds \$200,000. He said Botany Bay Construction Co. has agreed to install water and sewer lines for the Stearns Tavern's new home on Mill Street at no charge, and F.W. Webb has agreed to donate plumbing fixtures for the building's new bathrooms.

Environmental site work was done at the Mill Street location in January.

"The response from the community has been tremendous, and the city manager is most appreciative of all those who have come forward," Mr. Niddrie said.

The city soliciting bids for moving the building. Mr. Niddrie said the request for proposals will close in about two weeks.

"The biggest piece will be the installation of the foundation (at the new site), and we are still looking for partners to work on that," he said.