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City Closes a Portion of the Sidewalk on Lower Main Street for Safety

As part of preparations for the Picture Main Street project, city staff and the city's structural engineering consultants have been assessing the condition of vaults located beneath downtown sidewalks. These vaults are privately owned spaces that extend from some building foundations underneath the sidewalks.

During this work, the engineering consultants hired to make the assessments identified that the vault beneath the sidewalk at 56–58 Main Street is structurally compromised. There is no structural ceiling enclosing this vault under the sidewalk. The sidewalk serves as the ceiling and the beam supporting it exhibits significant deterioration, posing an immediate risk of collapse, even under pedestrian use. The building where this vault is located includes Florence Bank, a vacant former restaurant, and several upper-floor businesses and apartments. This concern pertains only to the sidewalk, not to the building.

VHB, the city's engineering consultant, reported, "The steel framing spanning from the building face to the exterior basement wall in one location is severely corroded, and... it appears that it is no longer structurally adequate to support load. At this time, we recommend restricting [sidewalk] vehicular and pedestrian traffic within the affected area until temporary shoring can be installed."

The city has closed a portion of the sidewalk to protect public safety while ensuring safe access to businesses and residences remains open. This closure is a temporary measure, and the city will continue to closely monitor the area.

Property owner Eric Suher has been notified of the findings, which will help him determine the best path forward to shore up his vault.