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## **Big Spring Economic Development Corporation**

Terry Wegman, Executive Director

215 W. 3rd Street

PO Box 3359

(432) 264-6032

800-215-6019

Fax: (432) 264-6047

[info@bigspringtx.com](mailto:info@bigspringtx.com)

## **Interior demolition at Settles almost complete**

*By admin*

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Almost one year and 700 tons of debris later, officials with the Settles Hotel Development Company say interior demolition work at the downtown landmark is nearing completion.

According to SHDC General Manager Kristopher Ryan, asbestos abatement and cleanup at the structure have gotten the thumbs-up from officials.

“Abatement Inc. out of Sugar Land recently completed the environmental clean-up and asbestos abatement at the Settles Hotel property in accordance with the abatement specifications prepared by Houston-based Honesty

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Environmental Services,” said Ryan. “Upon completion of abatement at each area, air samples were collected to verify that the clearance level for abatement projects — as specified by the Environmental Protection Agency and Texas Department of State Health Services regulations — was achieved.

“Interior demolition has reached substantial completion, except for several limited areas in the basement. We estimate approximately 700 tons of debris has been removed from the building during demolition.”

Ryan said structural repairs are also on the verge of being completed.

“Tommy E. Hixson and Associates Inc., from Eastland, recently inspected the historic structure and determined the Settles Hotel building is structurally sound,” said Ryan. “According to Mr. Hixson, the only damage (to the structure) appears to be the result of moisture infiltration and vandalism, and all the damage noted is repairable and the structure should continue to serve its intended use with the proper repairs and maintenance. Structural repairs, under the direction of Mr. Hixson, are approximately 90 percent complete.”

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Ryan said completion of the asbestos abatement and clean-up has allowed SHDC to take control of the building's title, part of an agreement between the development company and the Settles Hotel's prior owner, the city of Big Spring.

“The Big Spring City Council approved SHDC’s bid of \$75,000 in November 2006 and subsequently entered into a definitive purchase agreement. The agreement provided for title transfer upon completion of the environmental clean-up and asbestos abatement of the historic property.”

And while hammers continue to swing inside the Settles Hotel — now being heralded by city officials as the crown jewel of the downtown area — Ryan said work atop the building is under way, as well.

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“In addition, we recently completed removal of all letters from the historic rooftop sign,” said Ryan. “The original letters will be catalogued and used as templates for replicating the historic rooftop signage.”

Brint Ryan said the recent advances represent a milestone in the restoration of the hotel, which has endured numerous rehabilitation attempts in the past, along with vandalism and neglect.

“The title transfer of the Settles Hotel, along with completion of the environmental asbestos abatement and clean-up signals an important milestone in the restoration of the historic hotel,” said Brint Ryan. “We would like to express our appreciation to Mayor Russ McEwen, the city council, officials with the city of Big Spring and the Big Spring Economic Development Corporation for their continued support of these efforts.”

The building, erected for \$500,000 in 1930, was a destination of choice for travelers for many years — as well a center of activity for the community — but has been vacant and in an advanced state of dilapidation for more than

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two decades.

Brint Ryan, a Big Spring native, announced plans for the multi-million dollar renovation project in December 2006. According to SHDC officials, the project includes plans for commercial and residential use of the property, with retail space available on the first and second floors. The project's budget has ballooned from \$12 million to \$20 million since its inception, but Ryan insists he isn't interested in the project for its profitability.

“I have no aspirations of making a bunch of money on this project. I would like to limit the amount of money I lose on this project, but it’s clear to everyone that’s looked at this that it will never achieve a market rate of return,” Brint Ryan said in a previous interview with the Herald. “So, why am I doing it? I’ve been very fortunate in my career — some would say I’ve had some financial success — and I can’t think of a better way to invest it in a legacy I feel will be tremendous for this community.”

Contact Staff Writer Thomas Jenkins at 263-7331 ext. 232 or by e-mail at

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[citydesk@bigspringherald.com](mailto:citydesk@bigspringherald.com)