

The Baltimore City Paper actually reported on the Sapperstein criminal activities. Then the City Paper was bought by the Baltimore Sun, which ceased publishing articles about the Sapperstein's and as fate would have it, as the Baltimore Sun is circling the drain, Crime-lord, Mark Cary Sapperstein is in the process of buying the Baltimore Sun building.

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<http://www.citypaper.com/news/story.asp?id=3164>

The Nose | **Community**

Allegedly Baltimore Mayor, Martin O'Malley is having Gilbert Sapperstein's construction debris hauled away by Baltimore City trucks free of charge while Gilbert's busy stealing the \$3.5 million from Baltimore School Board

When the Walls Came Tumblin' Down

It was a dark day in Sowebo. On Saturday, May 20, a big hunk of the brick exterior of Nan and Glen's Beer Garden Café at the corner of Hollins Street and Arlington Avenue disengaged itself from the rest of the building. Drawn by the inexorable tug of gravity, this looming wall of bricks collapsed unceremoniously into the street. Fearing further collapse, city crews swept in with heavy equipment to finish the job, reducing the pre-Civil War building--an erstwhile neighborhood anchor--into a pile of rubble. Where's the bright spot in all this? It could have been worse. It could have happened during the Sowebohemian Arts Festival on the 28th, when hordes of rain-escaping revelers might have filled the bar. As it was, one person was struck with a falling brick and had to get stitches. But the dust is far from settled on this sorry event. Many of the Nose's Sowebo sources believe the catastrophe didn't have to happen, blaming it on what they claim was bungled and unauthorized renovation work by the café's proprietors, Glen Taylor and Nan Bosely. (Gilbert Sapperstein, who's somewhat of a Mobtown real-estate mogul, owns the building-turned-brick-strewn-lot).

The work drew neighborhood ire even before the collapse, when residents learned that a number of exterior renovations had not been approved by--or, the Nose later learned, even submitted to--the city Committee for Historical and Architectural Preservation. (The property is located in the Union Square Historic District, which designation necessitates the commission's OK for any exterior work.) But it was the interior modifications--over which the commission has no authority--that really raised concerns. The café was carved out of two rowhouses divided by a load-bearing wall; at issue is whether an attempt was being made to unite the two buildings, perhaps at the expense of the bricks in between. Neighbors didn't know what was up, stressing that building permits were never posted. (A rude sign inviting concerned folks to MIND YOUR OWN F'ING BUSINESS was, according to some residents.)

By law, bar owners must submit drawings of any planned renovations to the city Board of Liquor License Commissioners, better known as the liquor board. On the floor plan filed with the board, the wall dividing the two rowhouses is absent and a single bar snakes between the two buildings. The implication is that the owners were indeed trying to turn the two buildings into one, a tricky proposition requiring careful engineering. (As one angry Sowebo-ite told us, "Any child playing with blocks knows you can't pull out the center of a building and have it stand up.")

The permits issued to the café (in Sapperstein's name) for the interior work by the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) call for "cosmetic work only": repairing the floor, painting, and removing "nonstructural partitions." Taylor says the work done at the bar was fully in keeping with those provisions. While acknowledging that workers had "cut an opening through the wall" a month or so prior to the collapse, "no walls had been removed," he says. Taylor also seems a little peeved at all the clamor surrounding his café. "Every time I turned around there was an inspector or somebody hollering at me," he asserts. "But I had the permits."

The preliminary conclusions of an HCD investigation indicate otherwise, says department spokesperson John Wesley. "The removal of a primary, load-bearing wall was a great contributor to the collapse of the structure," Wesley says. "Our initial investigation shows that there was work done for which no permits were currently granted."

Fines can be levied for performing construction work sans proper permits, but of greater financial importance at the moment is the money the city dished out to raze and remove the terminally wounded buildings. Zack Germroth, another HCD spokesperson, says such work usually costs "tens of thousands of dollars." The city will try to recoup these costs from the building's owner, Germroth says, noting that a lien will likely be placed on the property.

Meanwhile, HCD's probe of the collapse has moved from the interior of Nan and Glen's to the interior of the department itself. Germroth says the agency is "looking at what our inspectors did" in assessing the work being done at Hollins and Arlington. "Five different inspectors went out there [between the start of the renovations last year and the collapse], and we're looking at the process."

One person who was raising red flags was JoAnne Whitely, who owned the buildings in their previous incarnations as Gypsy's Café and Tom Thumb's Tavern. Whitely lost the properties in a 1998 foreclosure, but owing to a delay in the updating of city property records, she says, she was listed as the owner until late last year. As a result, some neighbors began complaining to her about the curious renovations. On March 20, she submitted a five-page letter to Shawn Karimian, HCD's director of construction and buildings inspection, detailing what she saw as gross anomalies in the inspection process. Whitely wrote of her concern "that structural problems would develop at the site." In a response Whitely received more than a month later, Karimian essentially assured her that everything was hunky-dory: "All necessary permits have been obtained by the owner." A few weeks later, the café bit the dust.

Whitely says she is "heartsick" about the whole mess. "There is no reason for that building to have collapsed," she says. "How could inspectors have visited the site repeatedly and not seen what was going on?" The Nose is wondering the same thing.

Allegations are that Gilbert and Mark Cary Sapperstein's protection to operate their crime syndicate stems from their alleged personal and/or political ties to Maryland Democrat Boss, Joseph Curran Jr. (former "Mobbed Up" MD. Attorney General & his henchman, Lynne Battaglia, U.S. Attorney MD.) Martin O'Malley is Curran's son-in-law, so he is the heir apparent Maryland Democrat boss.