Project to restore, modernize old LNB building

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The old Louisiana National Bank building, built in 1910, is the site of the latest renovation project to be undertaken in downtown Baton Rouge, and is one of the few remaining structures which can be considered candidates for restoration.

Although small by modern office construction standards — both in size and dollar amount involved, the $650,000, two-story, 5,400-square-foot project continues the trend toward upgrading what once was a lively, mostly retail, central business district of the city.

The developer for the project at 236 Riverside Mall — adjacent to the site of the old Istrouma Hotel (now a parking lot) is Clements Properties, which operates out of Lakeland Park here. Clements, Blanchard & Holmes is the architectural firm and Ashton & Associates, the engineer. The latter two firms also operate from Lakeland Park.

With the exception of the old City National Bank and the old Sears buildings, virtually every structure along the mall has undergone some sort of facelift over the past few years, according to Ben Taylor of the Riverside Association of Greater Baton Rouge.

Taylor noted that “in an effort to show that downtown doesn’t have to be torn down to be improved, the Foundation for Historical Louisiana — in conjunction with the Downtown Development District and the Association — will sponsor a public forum in April featuring buildings in the downtown area which have been or are currently being renovated.”

A partial list, he noted, probably will include the Brunswick building on Laurel Street, the Louisiana Home Builders Association headquarters and the LNB building on Riverside Mall, the Old State House, and the Roux Building on North Boulevard.

Also included in the forum will be presentation of buildings which have a potential for renovation, Taylor added. Information on the forum is available at 387-2464.

The occupancy rate for commercial office space in this section now probably is “better than in any other part of the city,” Taylor noted. Rental rates downtown range from $7 to $20, he noted.

The old LNB building, acquired from the Murray Horowitz family, has had a variety of tenants over the years. Present plans call restoring the exterior of the structure to its original appearance, according to Mike Willingham of Con-Sul Corp., contractor for the job. The work will include saving the existing ornamental stonework and replacing stonework removed in past remodeling.

The building has been gutted and the interior will be

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