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The vacant one-story building that makes up 401 and 403 Granby St. could come down in the next 45 days.

Developer Buddy Gadams plans to demolish the approximately 10,000-square-foot structure in downtown Norfolk to make room for a five-story, mixed-use building of apartment and retail space.

And he isn't wasting any time.

Gadams hopes to tear down the building that sits on the corner of Freemason Street and start construction by the end of February.

The Norfolk Planning Commission made its final review of the project at its regular meeting on Jan. 10. Chairman Earl Fraley Jr. said the commission is making a recommendation to city council for approval of the project plans, which were first submitted to the planning department in December.

The 65,000-square-foot structure will include 2,500 square feet of retail space on the ground floor and 65 luxury apartments, a mix of studio, one- and two-bedroom units. Apartments will include balconies overlooking either Granby or Freemason Street, 9-foot ceilings, granite counter tops, stainless steel appliances, tiled bathrooms and walk-in closets.

Gadams, the CEO and president of Marathon Development Group Inc., said he is investing \$10 million in the project and apartment rental rates will range from \$1,000 to \$2,000 a month.

The Granby Municipal Building, which houses the city's utilities department and the division of codes administration, is across the street and Nana Sushi is next door.

Former tenants of the space include Clancy & Theys Construction Co., now in the Wells Fargo Center; Manhattan, a men's clothing store now on Military Highway; and Crystal Spa, which, according to Virginian-Pilot reports, was evicted from the building in July 2011 after the city inspector cited the business for allegedly offering sexual services to its clients.

Gadams does not yet have a retail tenant in mind for the new building, which he expects to open in February or March 2014.

"I don't think it will be a full-service restaurant, but it could very well be a clothing store or yogurt shop," Gadams said. "It could be a dry cleaners."



Efforts to secure a tenant won't begin, he said, until the building is six months from completion.

Demolition of the current building is expected to take a couple of days and Gadams said he plans to work closely with the city to keep sidewalks open, traffic flowing and neighbors happy.

Gadams is well-known for the failed Granby Tower project, a 34-story, \$180.5 million high rise of more than 300 condominiums that he first proposed in 2004. Though backed by the city of Norfolk, the project died when the federal government seized the parcel of land at Brambleton Avenue and Granby Street to expand the federal courthouse across the street.

Gadams has redeveloped and rehabilitated historic structures throughout Virginia, including the Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts and the Wainwright Building, on Freemason Street in Norfolk, which is being converted into 126 apartments.

Gadams said the construction is expected to be completed this summer.

His new developments in Hampton Roads include The Colonnades, condominiums on the corner of Princess Anne Road and Colonial Avenue in Ghent.

Despite some residents' opposition, Gadams said he's moving forward with East Beach Marina Apartments, on which he's partnering with developer John Biagas. The five-story complex with about 136 units will face East Beach in Norfolk. Construction is expected to start in late spring.

As for the project downtown on Granby Street, Gadams said a mixed-use building of apartments and retail space is the best use of the site.

"It seems like the streets are really coming alive in downtown Norfolk again," he said, "and we're making some big investments based on that."

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