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\$8M face-lift to extend life of worn-down Battery

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The Battery, Charleston's picturesque seawall at the tip of the peninsula, will soon be getting a more than \$8 million face-lift to repair crumbling concrete, wobbly slabs of bluestone and sinking sidewalks.

Located where, as locals like to say, the Ashley and Cooper rivers meet to form the Atlantic Ocean, The Battery is a popular spot for tourists, but it also protects some of the city's priciest real estate from the sea.

A preliminary engineering study found that all sections of The Battery need repair but that the mostly recently built section of The Battery, a World War I-era concrete section linking the high and low sections of the seawall, is in the worst shape.

Located at the curve where East Bay Street turns to Murray Boulevard, the concrete section is visibly failing, with rebar sticking out of the sidewalk at one point.

"I walk on The Battery most mornings, so I'm aware of it, and I think a lot of people have noticed it," said Councilman Henry Fishburne, whose district includes the neighborhood around The Battery, and who lives nearby. "Some of it looks like it's structurally questionable."

Low Battery, the section along Murray Boulevard built in the early 20th century, is the next priority for repairs, due to cracked and sinking sidewalks.

It's the original High Battery that's in the best shape, according to Laura Cabiness, the city's director of public services. She said High Battery was repaired and improved several times during the 19th century, most recently in 1893.

"It exists pretty much as it has since 1893, except it used to have a more ornate railing," she said. "The High Battery is in pretty good shape."

Repairing the more recent concrete section of The Battery will cost the most. Architectural firm Cummings & McCrady, which the city hired for the engineering work, estimated that restoring that section would cost about \$5.5 million. Low Battery will cost about \$1.8 million to fix, and another \$800,000 should take care of High Battery, Cabiness said.

"If you walk along High Battery now, some of the stones are loose and there are areas where you can see the concrete is cracked," she said.

Tourism taxes and fees will pay for the work, Cabiness said. White Point Garden, the park adjacent to The Battery, is being studied separately by the city for renovations expected to cost more than \$1 million.

City Council on Tuesday approved a \$330,000 contract extension with Cummings & McCrady to design The Battery restoration work and prepare contract documents. Cabiness said work on the first two sections could be done next year.

At the same meeting, council members also approved an increase in the cost of the renovation of Charleston's City Hall. An additional \$425,000 is needed to repair stonework that was uncovered during the project, an official from NBM Construction told council members.

"The stonework needs to be repaired now, or if not now, in the next several years," said Mayor Joe Riley, who urged City Council to approve the expense, which it did. With the change, the budget for the City Hall renovation stands at \$10.2 million.

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