



Historic Midtown chapel to close, may become entertainment Space

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By [Raisa Habersham](#), The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

A historic landmark in Midtown, a 91-year-old mortuary and chapel, will close its doors and may reopen later as “an entertainment and food space” according to its new owners.

Since it opened in 1928, H.M. Patterson & Sons-Spring Hill Chapel has held funerals for famous Atlantans including former mayors Ivan Allen Jr. and William B. Hartsfield, and writer Margaret Mitchell. The white chapel sits atop a hill on the corner of Spring and Tenth streets, one of Midtown’s busiest intersections, with nearby residential towers and skyscrapers.

Four acres, including the chapel building and two adjacent gardens were purchased in December by Atlanta-based developer Portman Holdings. Despite previous concerns

about how new development could change the old structure, a spokeswoman for Portman said any new development nearby will respect the old building.

“We intend to preserve the (chapel) and will engage a design and construction team with the relevant experience,” spokeswoman Jennifer Graham said in an emailed statement. Portman Holdings is a development firm founded by famed architect John Portman. Its most recent Midtown development is [Coda at Tech Square](#), a 750,000-square-foot building that includes office space, research labs, retail space, and a food hall.



Photo: The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Early plans call for the Spring Hill Chapel to sit next to a 600,000-square-foot development that will include a 300-unit residential building and hotel, Graham said. The development is expected to break ground in early 2021. The company will create a master plan for the property over the next year.

Midtown Alliance, a nonprofit coalition of businesses and leaders in the area, worked to get the historic protection for the chapel. The Alliance’s CEO and President Kevin Green said an “entertainment and food space” is an ideal use for a space like the Spring Hill Mortuary and could breath new life into that part of Midtown.

“We’ll see increased activity on a street that’s been lacking for a while, and at the same time, we won’t be losing some of (the city’s) history.”

A spokesman for previous owner Service Corporation International, based in Houston, declined to discuss the specifics of the sale, including the purchase price and why the company decided to sell.

Employees said the chapel closes Friday, but the mortuary business will continue operating its other locations.

“All funeral prearrangements made with Spring Hill will be honored by any other H.M. Patterson or Dignity Memorial location in the Atlanta area,” spokesman for Service Corporation International Christopher James said in an emailed statement.



Photo: The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

The Spring Hill Chapel was designed by the late architect Philip T. Shutze, who is famed for his many works including the Swan House and Rhodes House.

The Atlanta Preservation Center listed the property on its endangered list in 2001. The property became a historic landmark in August 2018, ensuring the main building, the front lawn and the north garden would be protected, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution previously reported. The historical designation also protected the site against future development and ensured the front of the building and garden can be seen from Spring Street. The building’s interior is excluded from protection.



Photo: The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

“As we begin this new decade, the Atlanta Preservation Center is excited that this landmark building will continue to grow our civic appreciation of preservation,” the organization’s Director of Operations David Mitchell said in an emailed statement.

Green said the building is one of 16 sites in Midtown currently listed as a historic landmark, meaning they will be preserved. He sees Spring Hill as a way to maintain Atlanta’s historic structures while repurposing the interior to benefit the area around it. He cited as an example the popular Ponce City Market, a successful new use of the historic Sears, Roebuck & Company building.

“I think the city is in the process of reevaluating its process and making sure we preserve our history as we grow as a city,” he said.