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## Press Release - 01/03/2015

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## Final East Campus configuration will preserve core of East Hall only

by Cheryl Roland  
January 3, 2014 | WMU News

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KALAMAZOO—Western Michigan University officials, honoring a previously announced Dec. 31 deadline for setting design parameters for the new **WMU Alumni Center**, have made a final decision to focus renovation only on the original core of **East Hall**, turning the birthplace of the University into a center that reflects national best practices, preserves the building's historic designation and incorporates a high level of sustainable building features.



A community input session is scheduled for Tuesday, Jan. 7.

Construction of the new WMU Alumni Center is expected to be complete by summer 2015. The plans for that center are still in development and a decision about the final building configuration was made so that design work could be finished in anticipation of a spring 2014 start to construction. The goal is to retain the building's designation as part of the National Register for Historic Places. The requisite funds to make that possible have been built into the final renovation budget.

The budget for the WMU Alumni Center has been set at \$21.4 million. Funds include \$15 million borrowed by the University in the fall as well as \$1 million donated by the WMU Alumni Association. The remaining \$5 million-plus will come from additional private gifts. Funds raised in excess of the project budget will go into landscaping for the site.

East Hall was completed in 1905. The north and south wings of the building, built in 1908 and 1909, respectively, will be demolished before construction on the alumni center begins, with the likely timetable for demolition likely to be late February or early March. During the design process, WMU officials noted that it would take nearly \$20 million in additional funding to preserve the exteriors of the wings and conserve the interiors for future use.

"Over the past year, we've identified significant levels of private support for the alumni center that will occupy the core of East Hall," says **Jim Thomas**, WMU vice president for development and alumni relations, whose units will ultimately be housed in the new center. "People are genuinely excited about the potential for this project. We're working to build a center that preserves and transforms the University's birthplace into a facility that serves both the campus and community and showcases that long and strong relationship."

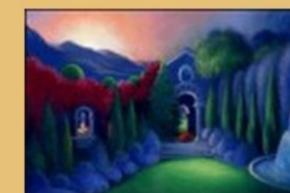
Thomas notes that University officials and teams from design firm TowerPinkster have visited other such centers around the nation to identify best practices and view some projects of similar size and budget. The design teams have visited alumni centers at Iowa State and Kansas State universities as well as renovated facilities at the University of Notre Dame and the Kresge Foundation.

### Second input session set

The second in a series of sessions offering the community an opportunity for input in the alumni center design process and an update on progress is set for **4 to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 7, at the Little Theatre** on the corner of Oakland Drive and Oliver Lane. **The input session has been canceled due to the weather-related University closure, and will be rescheduled.**



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