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East Campus Q&As
Oct. 1, 2013

Q What is the plan for East Campus?

The plan is to return the birthplace of the University to an important role in the daily life of the University. The core of East Hall, the building that was the original gift from the Kalamazoo community, will be conserved and renovated to become the WMU Alumni Center. The center and surrounding green space, plazas and gardens will join a number of other East Campus buildings already renovated by WMU to continue collectively the identity of East Campus. Those restored buildings include Walwood Hall, The Little Theatre and Oakland Gym. They will continue to make up East Campus, along with Spindler and Vandercook halls and other structures in the area. Three buildings--West and North halls and the Speech and Hearing Center will or have come down as part of the overall plan.

Q What is the status of the East Campus/Alumni Center project?

A. The final stages of demolition for West Hall and the Speech and Hearing Center will be complete in October. Phase II of the project includes abatement and architectural salvage in North Hall, now underway, and final decisions about how much of East Hall can be conserved.

Meanwhile, the archives and regional history materials are in the process of being moved from North and East halls to the new Zhang Legacy Collections Center on Oakland Drive. When complete, the historical records of 12 Michigan counties will be well safeguarded for the first time, along with WMU's archives, in an archival storage facility designed to maximize their longevity and usefulness to the public.

Q. What comes next?

Two community input sessions to help determine the design and features of the new WMU Alumni Center were held Oct. 1. Those sessions were solely focused on the renovation of East Hall into that new facility and provided an opportunity for interested members of the campus and local communities to tell the architects what features they believe will be important to include in a new alumni center.

Two additional sets of community sessions will be scheduled. One will be midway through the design process--likely in December. The final one will feature the architect's completed plans and should take place in late February or early March.

Q. What is the background of those in charge of the design process?

TowerPinkster is the local design firm WMU has engaged for the project. The firm's recent historic preservation successes include the Federal Building in Grand Rapids that was recently renovated for Ferris State University's Kendall College of Art and Design. That effort won the 2013 Governor's Award for Historic Preservation. The Accident Fund Insurance Company corporate headquarters in Lansing, Mich., is another of the company's adaptive reuse success stories.

The architectural team also is tapping the historic preservation expertise of **Gene Hopkins** from Hopkins Burns Design Studio of Ann Arbor, Mich. He brings more than 32 years of experience to the effort, including overseeing projects involving such National Historic Landmarks as the Grand Hotel, Fort Mackinac, the Michigan State Capitol and Fort Wayne. East Hall gained National Historic Landmark status in 1978.

Q. Why doesn't the University just mothball the East Hall wings for future renovation and decide later how to handle and fund renovation?

A. No final decisions have been made about the potential for keeping the wings for renovation in the near future. Much depends on fundraising levels and prospects, but a final decision must be made before design plans for the alumni center are finalized. Part of the conservation of East Hall will require adding or repurposing square footage for essential building services. Not having the final building configuration known will delay that process and ultimately lead to increased cost to complete the alumni center renovation.

Q. I've been told WMU plans to turn the Prospect Hill part of East Campus into a parking lot for tailgaters. Is that true?

A. No. There were never any plans to do that. Large areas of green space were always the intent. The story of creating a "tailgate parking" lot was something invented by opponents of the project. There will need to be adequate parking for the alumni center. Preliminary design plans suggest an expansion

northward of Parking Lot #1, which is between Walwood Hall and East Hall. Another possibility is an approach that calls for smaller and more widely separated lots. There was never an intention to replace buildings with asphalt. Part of the vision for the alumni center is to have around it an area of formal and informal gardens, walkways and plazas.

Q. What is happening to all the historic artifacts being retrieved before demolition?

A. Anything that can be used to renovate East Hall has been directed to that project. The pressed metal cornice from West Hall, for instance, will be used to replace severely damaged part of the East Hall cornice. Other items have been saved for display or recognition. Additional items were salvaged so that they can be repurposed and sold. The goal of the University is to conserve as much of the materials as possible. About 60-65 percent of the buildings coming down will be recycled, repurposed, salvaged or sold.

Q. When will renovation of East Hall begin?

A. Renovation will begin sometime in late spring of 2014 after the design process is completed. The new alumni center will be completed and ready for use by mid-2015.

Q. Will East Hall be renovated to LEED standards?

A. The goal is to make the facility a LEED Silver building.

Q. How will the University handle such sensitive issues as Dwight Waldo's ashes and the memorial gardens and flagpole site?

A. There are two memorial gardens and they will be saved, but maybe relocated. The veterans' memorial flagpole will be saved and relocated. Dwight Waldo's ashes are in East Hall. In the same way the University worked with the family to respectfully relocate the cremains of Paul and Flossie Sangren when new Sangren Hall was built, the University will work with the Waldo descendants to determine their wishes in handling our first president's ashes.