

TRIBUNE-REVIEW

IUP's \$250M renovation project a go

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Friday, December 3, 2004

All 15 residence halls at Indiana University of Pennsylvania are pegged for demolition or renovation as part of a seven-year, \$250 million on-campus housing plan announced Thursday.

University officials said they are committed to implementing a plan that will provide apartment-style housing for students, accentuate the park-like atmosphere offered by the Oak Grove in the center of the campus, and develop a boulevard along Pratt Avenue that eventually might extend to Philadelphia Street in downtown Indiana.

Wahr Hall, a 150-bed residence on the university's south quad, is scheduled to be the first building in the path of bulldozers in the summer of 2006. Two new buildings, with housing for 638 students, are expected to open for the 2007 fall semester.

Whitmyre Hall and two apartment buildings operated by the university, Campus Towers and University Towers, are the only on-campus residences that would be spared from a wrecking ball.

Overall, the plan outlines a campus that would feature 13 residence halls with about 3,900 beds in two-person suites or mini apartments accommodating two or four people. About 3,800 beds are offered on campus now.

"Our residential facilities must assist in recruitment, student satisfaction and student retention," said Rhonda Luckey, IUP's interim vice president of student affairs. "On-campus living provides important opportunities for students to become involved in the life of the university, exercise their leadership and succeed academically. These ideas were confirmed by students, who told us that they are expecting more intentional linkages between their in- and out-of-classroom experiences."

More than 2,500 people from the university and Indiana responded this fall to electronic surveys about residence hall options. IUP's project consultants, WTW Architects of Pittsburgh and Brailsford & Dunlavey, of Washington, D.C., collected the data and gave their recommendations to the university's trustees this week.

An analysis of the campus showed that some of the residence buildings are six, seven or eight stories high, making them out of scale with academic halls or other structures. Recommendations from the surveys and consultants call for the new residences to have no more than five stories.

The halls that will be replaced are between 28 and 52 years old, but one of the oldest buildings will serve as a model for the new residences. Whitmyre Hall, a three-story building

that houses the Robert E. Cook Honors College, has a "lovely architecture" that is consistent with other prominent structures on campus, said Interim President Dr. Diane Reinhard.

"We do want to see it as being more like Whitmyre and other buildings on campus that are on the Oak Grove," she said.

Another potential change for aesthetics would be the elimination of massive concrete and stone retaining walls on campus, such as one on Maple Street.

IUP guarantees housing to all of its freshmen. About 90 percent choose to live on campus.

Despite a need early this fall for transitional housing for an overflow of students, IUP officials said they don't expect the university's enrollment to increase in the coming years. Officials at the university and the State System of Higher Education have said the population of college-age residents in southwestern Pennsylvania is expected to plunge after 2007.

Reinhard said no more than 150 beds will be displaced at any time during the multi-phase project.

"Talk about competitive edge. Talk about attracting students. This will be very, very fine for the university," she said.

The university is exploring the feasibility of developing a public-private partnership to finance the project.

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