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MCC's Rochester campus enters 2nd construction phase

By: [Jason Whong](#) October 20, 2015



An exterior view of the Monroe Community College downtown campus now under construction, as seen from the corner of State St. and Morrie Silver Way. (LaBella Associates rendering)

The downtown campus now being built for Monroe Community College inside a former Kodak building represents more than just a new use for an old building downtown.

Committing to build the campus at 321 State St., in four connected buildings adjacent to Kodak headquarters, is also about fairness, county executive Maggie Brooks said Tuesday.

"MCC students deserve that same type of community commitment, the same type of prospect to learn and grow in a safe and nurturing environment" that the area's other college campuses see regularly, Brooks said at a ceremony to mark the start of the second phase of construction.



A ceremony marks the start of the second phase of construction on Monroe Community College's new downtown campus. (Jason Whong / The Daily Record)

"This campus will stand as a testament to our community's commitment to provide access to affordable, quality education for local students and adults," she said.

When finished, the campus will have 255,000 square feet in seven floors. The downtown campus will offer more than 40 degree and certificate programs, including law, criminal justice and education. The cost of the renovation is budgeted at \$78 million.

Monroe County and New York have both committed \$36 million for the construction; an additional \$6 million comes from grants awarded to Monroe Community College and matched by SUNY.

Anne M. Kress, president of Monroe Community College, stressed the quality of the new campus, set to open in fall of 2017.

"We'll have a state-of-the-art campus in downtown Rochester to help our students fulfill their hopes and dreams and aspirations," Kress said.



Nuri Simmons. (Jason Whong / The Daily Record)

One student at Monroe Community College, Nuri Simmons, 20, of Rochester, aspires to one day be district attorney.

Simmons, a sophomore criminal justice major, is vice president of governance at the student events and governance association at Monroe Community College's Damon City Campus, which is in the city's central business district. He plans to be finished with classes at Monroe by the time the new campus opens, but he is envious of the future students who will get to attend classes in the new campus.

"The campus we are at now is two floors, and it's a closed campus. So we don't have a lot of room, and a lot of opportunity and resources as opposed to (the main campus at) Brighton," Simmons said. "But now that we're moving to this campus, we'll have seven floors and more opportunity, and it'll be an open campus, and we'll have a better learning atmosphere here."



Robert Healy, president of LaBella Associates. (Jason Whong / The Daily Record)

Robert A. Healy, president of LaBella Associates, the Rochester-based lead architect on the project, said he is excited that the first three floors will be open to the public. There will be a cafeteria and book store on the first floor, and an event space on the third floor, he said.

Tying those three floors together is a main circulation staircase, Healy explained.

"When you walk into the building, you'll be able to sense that connection of those first three floors as you walk through it," he said.

Structural columns visible throughout the building required creativity in laying out the educational spaces and larger classrooms to prevent the columns from getting in the way, Healy said.



A staircase, seen here in this view of the lounge and atrium, creates a "campus spine" that connects the first three levels of the building and creates a social hub. Structural columns are also visible in the rendering. (LaBella Associates rendering)

Brighton-based DiMarco Constructors is overseeing construction for Monroe County. Phase 1 of the project, which included selective demolition, asbestos abatement and other infrastructure work, began in December.

The second phase of construction, marked by the ceremony Tuesday, will include renovating the building and making the classrooms, labs and other spaces.



John DiMarco, president of DiMarco Constructors.

John DiMarco, president of DiMarco Constructors, said that the work done in the first phase revealed the building was in great shape.

"Kodak usually spared no expense, so we got a great shell," DiMarco said.

Throughout construction, hundreds of people will work there any given day, DiMarco said, noting that the number would vary. There's a commitment to use local contractors, he said.

With phase two starting on time, DiMarco is confident the building will be ready in time for its Fall 2017 opening.

The interior nature of the work means weather shouldn't get in the way of timetables, he said.

"It's a great opportunity for people to work all winter, and still make it through the day," DiMarco said. "As you know, winters inside are better than winters outside around here."



This rendering depicts the library and learning commons, which combines a library, computer lab and tutoring space. (LaBella Associates Rendering)

The location of the new campus in High Falls gives Monroe Community College the potential to strengthen existing partnerships and to forge new ones, said Kress, the college's president.

"For example, across the street is WXXI. How can we be stronger partners with them in terms of helping our students become more media-savvy? When you look at where we are with criminal justice and the federal building, I mean all of those potential opportunities are there," Kress said.

"Having MCC in downtown Rochester, very close to many of the neighborhoods that need to access higher education is an incredible opportunity for all of the city, but also for all of our region," she said.