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Monroe Community College President Anne M. Kress, right, takes a tour of MCC's new downtown campus Tuesday. Four connected buildings once part of Eastman Kodak's corporate headquarters make up the new campus, scheduled to open in the fall of 2017. (Photo: MAX SCHULTE/@maxrocphoto/, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER)

New MCC downtown campus taking shape

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The tour given Tuesday of the renovations underway in four connected buildings — once part of Eastman Kodak's corporate headquarters — leaves much to the imagination of what Monroe Community College's new downtown campus will look like.

But MCC President Anne Kress seemed more than satisfied with what she saw.

"Over the past six months, this site has progressed enormously," said Kress. "What essentially happened is that you are starting to see the bones of a new campus. You can see the outlines of classes and science labs."

Located at the corner of Morrie Silver Way and State Street, the buildings were bought by Monroe County, which is MCC's local sponsor. The county has committed \$36 million to the new \$78 million downtown campus, with the state matching that amount.

An additional \$6 million comes from grants obtained by MCC and the county, which are matched by the State University of New York.

Monroe County Executive Cheryl Dinolfo, who accompanied Kress on the tour, also commented on the progress being made in the renovations and how the downtown campus "will certainly help drive the economic engine" of the region.

MCC will initially use about 255,000 square feet of the buildings and have 525 onsite parking spaces for MCC students and employees.

Renderings of different parts of the downtown campus were posted at various stops on Tuesday's tour.

But there were plenty of signs of the new campus emerging.

Walls have been knocked down so that the four connected buildings seem like one.

Section of floors have been removed to make room for an open-campus spine — a stairway in the middle of these structures — that goes up to the third floor.

"The space is going to be an orientation point, a gathering point — a kind of meet and greet," said Robert Healy, president of LaBella Associates, architects of the new building.

He contrasted the new with the old.

"We took a building of small office spaces and a kind of dark environment and opened it up," Healy noted.

The renovations are on schedule, with the new downtown campus slated to be ready in the fall of 2017.

Studs — slender steel supports that stretch from the floors to the ceilings to hang drywall — are everywhere, and a clear sign that the downtown campus is taking shape.

An enclosed events area, able to hold 200 to 300 people, has yet to be built. It will provide a meeting area now lacking at the Damon City Campus, which is MCC's downtown campus in rented space in the Sibley building

Finding a new site for a downtown campus was already underway when Kress took office almost seven years ago.

It turned out to be a prolonged process, with some wanting MCC to stay at its present site.

Kress said that existing programs at the current downtown campus — most notably criminal justice, human services and education — will be relocated to the new campus.

The downtown campus will house MCC's Division of Economic Development and Innovative Workforce Services.

Several pre-collegiate and service programs, including Upward Bound, will be at the new downtown campus as well.

And Kress said: "We are looking at adding new programs."

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The student lounge as it will look once MCC's downtown campus is complete.
RENDERING BY LABELLIA ASSOCIATES



The front desk at the future MCC downtown campus at State Street and Morrie Silver Way.
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