

MCC targets construction start on site next summer

By ANDREA DECKERT - 10/3/2014

See correction below.

Main construction work is slated to begin in summer 2015 on Monroe Community College's \$72 million downtown campus.

The goal is to have the site ready for the fall 2017 semester, said Paul Wurster, MCC's assistant vice president of facilities.

Wurster gave a presentation on the project at a recent BOMA of Greater Rochester meeting. The local organization is part of Building Owners and Managers Association-International.

The new Damon Campus will be located in former Eastman Kodak Co. space at State Street and Morrie Silver Way. Currently, the Sibley Building on Main Street houses the downtown campus.

An expanded facility—one the college can own and maintain—offers better future educational, parking and safety features for students and employees, college officials said.

With the new downtown site, MCC has the potential to double and possibly triple its student enrollment, Wurster said at the meeting.

Enrollment at MCC's Damon City Campus is nearly 3,000 students, an increase of more than 480 percent in the last 16 years, MCC said. The college has more than 16,400 credited students in total.

The funding needed to complete the multimillion dollar project was secured through Monroe County and New York State as part of Gov. Andrew Cuomo's 2014-15 executive budget.

LaBella Associates P.C. is designing the project with the S/L/A/M Collaborative Inc., a Connecticut-based space programming and educational planning firm.

DiMarco Constructors, part of the DiMarco Group, was named as the general contractor for MCC's downtown campus in July. DiMarco is working with Long Island-based LiRo Group on the project.

John DiMarco, president and chief operating officer, said his firm is responsible for selecting prime contractors for the project. The work will be done in a couple of phases, he said.

DiMarco is working on design and development plans along with the other firms, as well as MCC and the county. They have started pre-construction walk-throughs at the site, but no physical work has been done, DiMarco said.

The next step is to open the bid for the infrastructure division phase, he said. This means the portion of the existing building that will become MCC will be set apart from the existing complex—which includes buildings retained by Kodak and Carestream Health Inc.—so it will be self-contained.

The bidding for that part of the project will begin early this month, with work starting shortly after that, DiMarco said.

"When this phase is complete, the building will be ready for the main construction stage to begin," he said.

The plan is for MCC to renovate and occupy some 250,000 square feet of the complex, MCC's offerings there will include classrooms, faculty offices, a bookstore, student services, learning commons and operations, Wurster said.

Remaining space will be undeveloped, but it is being marketed by Start-Up NY and will be available for lease, he added.

The Start-Up NY program proposed by Cuomo and approved by the state Legislature creates tax-free zones in and around SUNY campuses.

To participate, businesses must be aligned with or further the academic mission of the campus, college or university sponsoring the tax-free community. Each participating business must create and maintain new jobs to participate, and the business also must be a new startup, a company relocating to New York from out of state or an expansion of an existing New York company.

College officials have said the State Street property would give the college a chance to grow in a location that is safer and more affordable than its current location. An independent engineering analysis showed staying in the Sibley Building downtown would cost \$10 million more than moving to the new location.

MCC trustees voted in December 2011 to select the site as the future home of the downtown campus. The Monroe County Legislature approved the property purchase in early 2013 for \$2.99 million. The college closed on the property in June 2013.

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Correction

In an article published Oct. 3, a Monroe Community College official was quoted saying its new downtown campus has the potential to double and possibly triple enrollment; MCC has since said that is not the case.