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Living arrangements for University of Dayton students keep getting better.

The University of Dayton board of trustees approved $2.8 million Friday, Jan. 22, to renovate Stuart Hall's lobby, elevators and common areas.

This will be the second and final phase of Stuart Hall's renovation. The University completed the first phase, which included upgrades to air conditioning, windows, restrooms, central gathering areas and space for campus ministry, plus installation of new drywall, carpet, ceilings and lighting, during the summer of 2009.

The total cost of the Stuart Hall project, which is financed by University funds and bonds, is $16 million. Stuart Hall, built in 1964, houses 632 students in 316 rooms.

Stuart Hall is in the midst of a universitywide, five-year, $42.5-million renovation to residence halls. The University already has completed a $20 million renovation to the Marycrest residence facility and nearly $6 million in renovations to the Virginia W. Kettering and Campus South residence facilities.

The overall goal is to "provide as comfortable and welcoming an environment as possible for our students," according to Leslie Groesbeck, director of planning and construction management.

During President Daniel J. Curran's seven-year tenure, the University has invested more than $100 million on the construction of new residence facilities — Marianist Hall, ArtStreet and houses in the student neighborhood — in addition to the renovations. The University also built the $25.3 million RecPlex recreation facility.

"This is an investment in our distinctive learning-living environment," Curran said. "The University is fiscally sound and moving forward based on strong enrollment, record research and strong financial management."

The trustees also approved the final phases of a project to update the University's central mall, which will increase green space, add walking paths and eliminate a parking lot.

The campus mall project will go out for bid with construction slated to begin in March.

Plans for the mall, located between Kennedy Union and Marycrest, call for a terraced amphitheater and overlook to be built into the hill in front of Marycrest, on the former site of the Mechanical Engineering building. Low seat walls and benches will border the lawn and more than 100 new trees will provide shade. The plaza just east of Kennedy Union will be completely rebuilt to better accommodate outdoor dining, casual gathering and organized campus activities.

Four new pedestrian paths will provide safe, direct and attractive routes to the rest of campus, and accommodate service and emergency vehicles as well as private vehicles on move-in days.

"The goal is to update the mall so it doesn't just feel like an empty lawn," said Beth Keyes, assistant vice president for facilities. "We want it to be sculpted, intentional, like Central Park in New York City."

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