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Riverfront Redevelopment Begins

09.06.2007 | Campus and Community  The University of Dayton has hired Steve R. Rauch Inc. to extract architectural remnants from Building 26 in preparation for the removal of asbestos and the demolition of the building.

The company begins the three-week project this week. In May, the Ohio Historic Preservation Office said that the heavily altered structure appears to be ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places. That opinion verified a January study by ASC Group Inc., specialists in historic architectural assessments.

Hull & Associates Inc. will oversee the 11-acre riverfront redevelopment project, which includes making the site shovel-ready by cleaning up the soil. The work, which paves the way for redevelopment on what's been called the city of Dayton's most developable piece of land, is being conducted under a $2.54 million Clean Ohio Revitalization Fund grant.

Under the grant's implementation schedule, Hull & Associates Inc. will solicit bids this month and recommend a contractor by early October. Asbestos will be removed from the building beginning in early November. The building is expected to be torn down by early 2008. Soil clean-up will begin in early March and is slated to be completed by May 2008. Next summer, Hull & Associates Inc. will prepare a report for the Ohio EPA, which will verify that the work meets clean-up standards for its intended redevelopment and relieve the University of Dayton of any additional soil remediation responsibilities. The site is expected to be ready for development by fall 2008.

The University of Dayton's master plan, which will be completed in October, will not show concepts for this part of UD's 259-acre campus. Instead, UD plans to consult with economic development officials and community leaders and entertain proposals from private developers for projects that complement proposed Sugar Camp and Ball Park Village residential developments and new restaurants and retail outlets on Brown Street. In the last two years, UD has teamed with developers on two new ventures: University Place, a two-story mixed-use development on the corner of Brown and Stewart streets that includes graduate apartments, a restaurant and retail outlets, and Courtyard by Marriott at the University of Dayton, a hotel near UD Arena.

The purchase of 50 acres of land from NCR, part of which is a brownfield that requires environmental clean-up, has captured the imagination of campus and community officials. Most of NCR's manufacturing facilities on the site were removed in the 1970s, and the property has remained largely unused since then. In all, the University of Dayton has attracted more than $9 million in state and federal funding for clean up and infrastructure improvements for what ultimately may be the largest and most complex revitalization project in Dayton.

"The funds will allow the University of Dayton to build for its future as well as revitalize this area of the city," said Daniel J. Curran, University of Dayton president. "We are grateful to campus and community leaders who see the potential in this land and are working to bring its transformation to fruition.

As UD begins to address the land's environmental issues, Curran reaffirmed UD's pledge to work with the Dayton community to create a lasting, significant and visible means of telling the story of the people and technological advances that occurred on the site of Building 26. UD will donate architectural remnants from Building 26 to Dayton History, whose board of trustees has committed to telling the story of Joseph Desch and the Dayton codebreakers at nearby Carillon Historical Park as part of an ambitious effort to turn the 65-acre park into a more interactive experience for visitors. UD remains committed to a commemoration on the original site.

Before making the decision to remove the building, UD officials explored alternatives. According to Martin-Beachler Architects, it would cost about $3 million just to demolish the three 1960s additions to the building and replicate the original façade. A complete restoration of the building would cost millions more. Last year, UD turned to the Miller-Valentine Group to assess the use and availability of historic tax credits, which are available if a building is listed on the National Register. UD officials also have investigated the feasibility of adaptive reuse with Burt Hill, Martin-Beachler Architects and the Miller-Valentine Group. They indicated it did not make economic sense to invest in a building that's lost its integrity.

"I respect the passion of those who wanted to save the building. I also appreciate the support of others who recognized that the
building lost its historical integrity decades ago and know that as a tuition-driven university, UD cannot justify spending millions of dollars to save it," Curran said. "Working with the community, we can, and will, honor history while we build for the future."