Which would you rather call home: Renovated older housing, retrofitted for today's needs, but with quirky charm and a sense of history? Or brand spanking-new construction with all the latest modern conveniences built for 21st century technology?

University of Dayton students may have trouble deciding which they prefer: Marycrest or Marianist? The residence halls are different, by design.

Some students maintain "the 'Crest is the best." UD's largest residence hall, seven-story Marycrest Complex is home to about 560 first-year and 300 second-year students and is co-ed by floor. Built in 1962 as the campus' first residential facility for women students, this past summer Marycrest underwent the second phase of a nearly $20 million renovation.

In summer 2006, Marycrest's south wing received a massive makeover, including new Pella windows, plumbing, air conditioning, upgraded electrical systems, new elevators and expanded and renovated restrooms. In Marycrest's common areas, cosmetic upgrades included new flooring, paint and wall finishes (the telltale '60s salmon-pink hallway wall tile has been covered with drywall). In student rooms, birch wall units were refinished with a richer cherry stain, and new laminate vanity tops, mirrors and lighting were installed.

"Our goal is to add amenities to our traditional residence halls. The majority of the renovations have focused on upgrading Marycrest's infrastructure," said Jack Dempsey, director of residence hall operations.

Since May 5, when students left for the summer, as many as 200 construction workers at a time hustled through the second phase of renovations, upgrading the middle and north wings of the vintage building. A sign posted by Messer Construction kept the goal in focus: "356 rooms, 87 days. Can we do it? Yes we can."

UD students returned this month to find that each wing of each floor has its own open, airy lounge geared toward student meetings and study groups. (See photos). Every room features microwave-fridge combos and new two-position desk chairs that let students lean back – without damaging the chair legs. Restroom facilities have been expanded and renovated, an especially welcome addition to the building's middle wing.

There's space for 33 residential education staff members, up from 21, which provides more individual attention for students and facilitates learning communities.

Marycrest's double rooms at 10 feet by 16 feet are the largest on campus. Triple rooms are as passé as the index cards once used by Marycrest co-eds to sign out for dances, parties and babysitting jobs and sign in before curfew.

What's best about the 'Crest, though, remains timeless. Ann Craven, Marycrest's facilities and operations manager, mentions amenities such as the full-service cafeteria, which seats 320 people. Students will tell you about Marycrest's legendary friendly "cafeteria ladies," who know you by name and will ask how you did on your chemistry test.