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UD's Position on Building 26

04.20.2007 | Campus and Community, Culture and Society (Editor's Note: In a public hearing on April 19, Thomas Burkhardt, vice president for finance and administrative services, outlines UD's position on Building 26, which it plans to tear down following an independent study that finds the heavily altered building ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Mark Epstein from the Ohio Historic Preservation Office convened the hearing in conjunction with UD. Here are excerpts of Burkhardt's remarks.)

Why we are here

- * Thank you, Mark.
- * I'm Tom Burkhardt, vice president for finance and administrative services for UD. Dr. Curran had planned to be here, but was asked by student leaders to meet with them tonight about the Virginia Tech tragedy.
- * The University of Dayton is here to listen to public input about Building 26 and share the studies we've done that led to the decision to remove it, a decision supported by UD's Board of Trustees' executive committee.
- * We want to make sure we aren't missing any important information about the building and will consider new information about the structure that might emerge from this meeting as we proceed.
- * Further, we want to clarify how UD has engaged interested parties over the last two years and throughout our decision-making process.

Assessment of Building 26

- * The studies by recognized professionals are clear and unambiguous. Building 26 has lost its historical integrity.
- * It's not eligible for the National Register, as you will hear in the ASC Group report.
- * It will cost about \$3 million just to demolish the additions and replicate the façade only.
- * We respectfully believe there is a better way to tell the story about the history that occurred here.

Public involvement

- * From June 2005, when we acquired the building, we've had ongoing involvement from and communication with the preservation community and those with special ties to Building 26.
- * A variety of interested parties have been invited to tour the building and provide input as early as July 2005.
- * Prior to our hiring historical and architectural consultants, representatives from the preservation community were invited to conduct their own survey of the building.
- * Consultant reports and architect reports have been shared with interested parties at various times.
- * We created the Historical Stewardship Group, chaired by Dr. Vince Russo, to develop a lasting, significant and visible means of telling the story. Community members included in that group are Brady Kress, Dayton History; David Bohardt, Preservation Dayton; Bruce Langos, NCR; Jeff Bruce; and Debbie Desch Anderson.

The larger picture

- * Building 26 is one piece of a historic large-scale development that will change the face of the University, the city of Dayton and the region.
- * UD has stepped up to take the risk to clean up and develop the 49-acre brownfield that has sat vacant and unused for many

years

* The University has obtained a complex array of federal, state and local support to prepare it for development; some of those funds must be spent soon or may be forfeited. We intend to move forward toward approval of the overall master plan for the Campus West project later this year.

* We have a strong track record of working with our partners on economic, community and neighborhood development projects – such as the Genesis project – that benefit the entire community.

* We take our community responsibilities seriously and value community input.

In conclusion

* At issue here is the question: how can we - along with our community partners and friends - find creative ways to remember what happened here and tell the story of how it affected the course of history?

* We believe our studies are sound, but we remain interested in hearing any new information that may arise tonight.

* We realize the course we've charted has not pleased everyone, and we respect those with a passion for this piece of history. However, our fundamental responsibility is to the University and the greater Dayton community.

* We hope we can all come together as partners following this meeting, and we invite those interested to help develop a lasting historic commemoration.