

## U-M project tally rises to \$1.75B

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The C.S. Mott hospital project currently is U-M's largest, valued at \$523 million. A massive \$1.75 billion building effort under way at the University of Michigan is helping prop up the local economy and modernize the university's aging facilities.

The latest among the projects are two next expansions totaling \$152.9 million and approved in December by the Board of Regents.

The new projects – a new law school building and a new North Campus data center facility – are expected to begin moving forward in various stages this year and be ready for students early in the next decade.

In addition to the newly approved developments, \$1.6 billion worth of significant projects are under way or have been recently completed at the university, according to Business Review estimates. The new structures total 3.5 million square feet.

The law school plans call for a new, 100,000-square-foot academic building south of Monroe Street, as well as renovating and expanding the existing facilities, which are about 80 years old. It's expected to cost \$102 million.

The new facilities could open for the fall of 2012 and would help instructors stress practical application of the law, said Dean Evan Caminker. He said the school has run out of ways to reconfigure the existing buildings as enrollment has more than doubled to 1,100 since the construction of the Law Quad.

"A lot of us have really great, but old, buildings – and teaching formats have changed a lot over time," Caminker said.

He said the law school has raised about \$30 million of its goal of \$70 million to contribute to the project.

Meanwhile, the university is also proceeding with plans for a 47,000-square-foot facility to house the data center operations of its hospital and health system on North Campus. It has outgrown its existing 6,000-square-foot space in the Taubman Health Center as information technology has changed rapidly over the past 20 years.

The data center is expected to cost \$50.9 million and would have room for the health systems' servers, paging equipment and file storage.

Jocelyn DeWitt, chief information officer of U-M's hospitals and health centers, said the new facility could be operational by the end of 2010.

"As the patient care becomes much more digital, this then provides the infrastructure," she said.

While the law school and data center improvements are among the most recent and notable of U-M's projects, at least 20 other projects are under way or have recently been completed on campus.

The largest project, a new inpatient facility and other upgrades for the C.S. Mott Children's and Women's Hospital, is 1.1 million square feet and is expected to be finished in the fall of 2010 at a cost of \$523 million.

The hospital work, which began in October 2006, is one of U-M's largest projects in decades, nearly three times the size of the 400,000 square feet of improvements being made to Michigan Stadium.

The third-largest plan, a new North Quad residence hall and academic center, is 360,000 square feet and could be ready in the summer of 2010 at a cost of \$175 million.

### **Big effect on economy**

Locally, these projects have a significant impact on the economy, said Gretchen Waters, executive director of the Washtenaw Contractors Association.

"They're all really important," she said. "U-M is absolutely critical in the health of the construction industry."

In addition to the high-profile developments, Waters said many of the small to mid-level projects are also crucial for local companies, and she estimated most of the work for her members is in the \$5 million to \$10 million range.

But getting the work is competitive, contractors say.

Andrew Shmina, president of A.Z. Shmina Inc. in Brighton, said firms of all sizes line up to secure contracts with the university, and companies usually zero in on their areas of expertise.

"It's very competitive," he said. "It's more competitive than you think in that the skills economy is depressed."

Within such fierce competition, there's also little room for error, Shmina said. Most critical is hitting the completion date on time and on budget. "There's always pressure," he said. "U-M sticks to their completion dates."

For architects, however, the impact is not as great. The university has often tapped firms from Detroit or out of state for its projects, and Ann Arbor studios are left with smaller jobs.

"Some of the smaller jobs we've been able to bid successfully," said Kristen Schleick, president of the Huron Valley chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

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