

From: [Leah D Nixon](#)
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Subject: Ferris' KCAD Moves Forward on Federal Building Renovation
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Included below is a press release regarding renovation of the old Federal Building in downtown Grand Rapids to provide additional exhibition areas, classrooms and administrative space for Kendall College of Art and Design of Ferris State University. Further information is available by contacting Leah Nixon, assistant director of News Services.

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Ferris' Kendall College of Art and Design Moves Forward on Federal Building Renovation

BIG RAPIDS – As the state Senate and House near completion on action to provide tax credits for renovation of the old Federal Building in downtown Grand Rapids, Ferris State University announced that to facilitate efforts, its partnership with the Christman Company has moved into a new phase to advance the project estimated to cost \$28 to \$31 million.

Ferris and Christman have been laying the groundwork for the project since spring of 2008. Upon completion, the building will provide exhibition areas, classrooms and administrative space for Ferris' Kendall College of Art and Design.

“A renovation of the Federal Building, which will feature many elements of sustainable design, will provide great benefits for both Kendall College and the city of Grand Rapids,” said Ferris President David Eisler. “The upgraded building will extend the Kendall campus, relieve the city of upkeep costs and provide a space available for such events as the ArtPrize competition – the runner-up of which was a Kendall alumnus.”

Eisler credited several area lawmakers with recognizing that the proposed \$10.6 million in tax credits for the project will both preserve city history and provide an important resource for the future.

“This has really been an example of our elected officials seeing an opportunity and coming together to seize that opportunity,” Eisler said. “Many people have been involved, but leadership has especially come from Rep. Roy Schmidt, Rep. Burt Jackson, Sen. Bill Hardiman, Sen. Jason Allen, and of course, Mayor George Heartwell. Without the backing of the city as personified by Mayor Heartwell, this innovative public-private collaboration between Grand Rapids, Ferris and Christman would not have been possible. We are truly gratified in their belief that our expanded presence will be good for the city and entire region.”

With space for expansion at a premium, a renovated Federal Building will be a good match for a growing Kendall College, which has seen student enrollment grow from 931 at the start

of the 2004-05 academic year to 1,385 this past fall – a 48.8 percent increase.

“Our expansion into the Federal Building will be a visible reminder that Kendall and Grand Rapids are both thriving,” said KCAD President Oliver Evans. “Increasingly, students have been attracted by our mix of offerings – from fine arts study, to arts education and design for industry, especially the furniture industry. Not only will the new facility increase our capability to deliver education but will raise our profile and help make more people aware of the kinds of programs Kendall has to offer.”

Ferris selected the Christman Company after a competitive search for a partner with the expertise to successfully transform the building while keeping its historic elements intact. The Christman Company is currently working on a major renovation of former Ottawa Power Station in Lansing to house the world headquarters of the Accident Fund Insurance Co. of America. It is also building a six-story, \$31 million parking structure as part of the project. Additionally, the company has at least 70 Leadership in Energy and Environment Design (LEED) accredited professionals on its staff, and earlier this year its own headquarters building received the Associated General Contractors of America Aon Build American Merit Award for Building Renovation. The headquarters has additionally received the Beyond Green High-Performance Building Award from the Sustainable Buildings Industry Council.

At present, different bills addressing the tax credit have passed the House and Senate and will have to be reconciled. Once completed, the university will lease the building from Christman, who will own title jointly with the city, for the period the tax credits are in effect. Ownership will then pass to Ferris State University.

The Federal Building opened in 1911 and has most recently been home to the Grand Rapids Art Museum. Among the major aspects of the building’s renovation will be a new roof and mechanical systems. A portion of the foundation has also undergone shifting, which will require stabilization. The extent of the building’s decline has raised the projected cost of the project from an initial estimate of \$10 million. Once the tax credits are in place, Ferris will begin the task of raising funds to make the project fiscally viable.

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