

Dorm will combine space for residences and academics

for creative or scholarly projects.”

While no designs have been drafted, the new building will be much larger than the existing building, officials said.

Coleman said the plan also fits well with Ann Arbor's recent discussions to diversify the core of the city and increase density downtown, drawing more people there.

Although most of the building will be demolished to make way for the new dorm, the portion of the building that contains a Carnegie Library – which once was the city's library – will be preserved and incorporated into the new construction, Coleman said.

The building was completed in 1907 and used as Ann Arbor High until U-M purchased it in 1956. The high school was then moved to the site of Pioneer High and the library was moved to its current location at Fifth and William.

U-M expanded the building and today it is home to 27 classrooms, the Trueblood Theatre and various administrative offices for part of the School of Music and several departments of the College of Literature, Science and The Arts.

Coleman said she is sensitive to the fact that many city residents still recall the Frieze Building fondly as Ann Arbor High School. But she said it would cost more to fix up the building to modern specifications than to replace it. Coleman called the current condition of the building “pretty appalling.”

The plan solves two problems for the university. U-M would like more upperclassmen to live on campus, but it currently does not have enough beds for them. The university is under pressure to curb underage alcohol use and studies show students learn better when their home lives are more closely connected to their academic lives.

The plan also solves the problem of what to do with the Frieze building, which is deteriorating.

Still, many in the city fondly recall their days attending high school at the building. “I sort of wish it didn't have to be, but I guess time marches on,” said

Clarence Dukes, who graduated from high school in 1950 and served on the Ann Arbor School Board from 1972 to 1978.

U-M officials say they want to be mindful of the site's history, while reinvigorating it as an exciting place for students to learn and live.

E. Royster Harper, U-M's vice president for student affairs, said the new building will be a “showpiece” for the university.

“It's going to be a fabulous residence hall,” she said. “It will be connected with this academic space that's also exciting.”

Exactly what will go into that academic space has not yet been decided. A task force has been talking about how to flesh out Coleman's desire to better knit together students' living and academic environments, and will hold a retreat on the topic on Sunday. But it could turn out that the building has classrooms, seminar rooms, studios, offices for faculty, and performance spaces that are separate from the dorm rooms. Students could bump into their professors at the dining hall, or hold activities in the common areas.

“The educational experience of a student is not just in the classroom,” said Carole Henry, director of University Housing and assistant vice president for student affairs. “It's really the total experience the student has on campus.”

The Frieze Building is currently used by seven academic units: Theater and Dance, Film and Video, Communication Studies, Center for Judaic Studies, Near Eastern Studies, Asian Languages and Cultures, and Linguistics.

The departments of Theater and Dance will eventually move to the Walgreen Drama Center and Arthur Miller Theater, which are being constructed on North Campus. Some of the other departments could stay in the new building, and others could move elsewhere on campus.

Coleman is calling for an aggressive construction schedule that would allow work to begin in 2006, and finish in 2008.

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