

Alfred University moves site for new ceramics museum

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Alfred University will build its new Schein-Joseph International Museum of Ceramic Art at Alfred University on the site where Davis Gym now stands, AU President Charles M. Edmondson announced today. "There were several reasons behind our decision to move the proposed location for the new museum, not the least of which was the community's response to the South Hall site," said Edmondson. Initially, the University had proposed to tear down South Hall, which had been built in the early 1900s as the Alfred community school, but in recent months, community residents petitioned the University to reconsider its plans. "Residents raised valid concerns about parking and traffic," said Edmondson. "We agreed that there might be other locations with greater visibility from Main Street and better access and parking for visitors." In addition, use of the South Hall site would have forced the University to tear down and rebuild Crandall Health Center. "That would have been an additional expense not included in our original estimates," he said. Alfred University received a total of \$9.2 million through the State University of New York Construction Fund to build the new facility. "With the additional expense of relocating the health center, the state allocation would not have covered our total costs," Edmondson said. Edward G. Coll, Jr., chairman of the Committee of 44, an economic development advocacy group that includes representatives of industry, higher education, non-profit agencies and government, said he endorses the new site because of the enhanced visibility the Davis Gym site will afford the Museum. "From the beginning, our goal for the Museum was to enhance economic development in the region," said Coll, who is president emeritus of Alfred University and who was instrumental during his tenure as AU president in securing state assistance to build the new Museum. "The creation of the Schein-Joseph International Museum of Ceramic Art at Alfred will be the greatest boost to retail and mercantile trade we've ever witnessed in the Town and Village of Alfred, and the effects will spill over into other communities in the region when tourists and other visitors take advantage of what this one-of-a-kind museum has to offer," Coll said. Other factors also made the Davis Gym site more appealing than the South Hall site, Edmondson said. "The ceramics museum is an integral part of our School of Art & Design," said Edmondson. "Students use the museum's collections in their study of ceramic art and art history. The Davis Gym site, located across Pine Street from Harder Hall where the School of Art & Design is based, makes a great deal of sense because of its proximity to our other art facilities. It's more convenient for our students and faculty to make use of the Museum." Finally, with the announcement that Marlin Miller intends to build a 500-seat theater at the Miller Performing Arts Center, the Davis Gym site becomes even more attractive as a Museum site. "It will give us a clustering of facilities for our visual and performing arts programs on the northern end of campus that I think will allow us even greater opportunities to develop academic programs that relate to both those areas," said Edmondson. Bruce Kallman of Kallman McKinnell and Wood, Boston, MA, is the architect who will be working with the State University of New York Construction Fund on the design of the Museum, as well as on the Miller Performing Arts Center theater. Wood was also the architect for the original Miller Performing Arts Center building, which has won two major awards, one for the use of brick in its construction, and the other for its functionality as a performing arts facility. The University has no immediate plans for South Hall, which has been vacant since 1995 when the Powell Campus Center opened. During the construction of the new campus center, the building was used for some student activities. Before that, the building had been leased to the Allegany County ARC to house its day program for developmentally disabled adults. Davis Gym, which has seen only limited use since the McLane Physical Education Center opened more than 30 years ago, would require prohibitively expensive rehabilitation work for it to be used on a day-to-day basis by the University.