Fieldhouse dream closer to reality
Multipurpose facility being designed with community in mind

Hope's effort to build a multipurpose spectator facility has entered a new phase with the college seeking local support for the project, which is being planned with community use in mind.

Hope announced the community phase of fund-raising for the DeVos Fieldhouse on Tuesday, July 9, during a press conference held at the former Western Foundry site on Fairbanks Avenue and 8th Street. Demolition of the vacated factory, which the college purchased in late June, has already started in conjunction with the project.

“We are very pleased to be sufficiently far along with our fund-raising to announce that this is a project that is going to happen,” said President James Bultman ’63. “There is a considerable ways to go yet on the fund-raising part of it and also with the acquisition of some properties, but we will continue to work diligently on addressing both of these matters.”

A total of $13.5 million has already been raised or pledged for the anticipated $20 million project, which is part of the Legacies: A Vision of Hope capital campaign. The college hopes to raise $1.5 million from the community as it seeks the final $6.5 million for the facility.

“At the present time, we want very much to give people in the community an opportunity to participate as they are able and as they desire in this project,” President Bultman said. “At first blush it may seem since Hope is going to own and operate the facility that this is a building just for Hope College, but that’s never the way that we envisioned it. The intention from the beginning has been to share this building with the Holland community.”

“Just as we have built in the past,” McGeehan said. “I know, whether we are alumni of Hope or other schools, whether we’ve lived in Holland all of our lives or just moved here fairly recently, this facility will become a showplace and a showcase of how Hope and Holland build together—for the future, just as we have built in the past.”

“From the first time I heard of this announcement, I heard ‘This is for Hope, this is for Holland Christian, and it’s for the greater Holland community,’” he said. “We need to remember that. We need to celebrate that as we stand here together.”

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The college is currently developing program statements that will consider college needs and community use. Potential uses include intercollegiate athletic events, sports events for local high schools, graduations, concerts, Tulip Time events and other community events. President Bultman noted, for example, that he intends for the building to host Holland Christian’s basketball games, particularly as future renovation activity will make the Civic Center unavailable.

Hope teams expected to call the building home include men’s basketball, volleyball and women’s basketball.

The fieldhouse will provide the first on-campus home court for the men’s basketball team in more than 70 years. Hope has played its men’s basketball games at the Holland Civic Center since the 1954–55 season. The team has not played its home games in an off-campus facility since the 1929–30 season, when it moved from the Carnegie Schouten gymnasium to the Holland (National Guard) Armory, where games were played until the Civic Center was built.

The Dow Health and Physical Education Center, opened on the Hope campus in 1975, was designed as an activity-oriented facility, and has served to a limited degree as a spectator facility for sports including swimming, volleyball and women’s basketball.

McGeehan celebrated the importance of the athletic venues that have preceded the fieldhouse, and also celebrated the foundry itself, and the role that it and its employees played in the community. The business operated for most of the 20th century. It began as the Superior Foundry Company in 1916, and was purchased by Western Foundry Company of Chicago, Ill. in 1929. It closed in the fall of 2001.

“We don’t forget the old memories, but it’s time that we start to build some new memories for a new generation of young men and women who are going to have the joy of recreating in a much-needed new facility,” he said.

The college announced the spectator facility project and the leadership gift from the Richard and Helen DeVos Foundation, the largest gift ever given to Hope for a capital project, in March of 2001.

The new fieldhouse will be built on the former Western Foundry site property purchased by the college in late June. The factory stands just across Fairbanks Avenue from Hope’s campus where Ninth Street curves into Eighth. The main campus is out of view at top left.

For more information about the campaign, please visit the college on-line at www.hope.edu or call (616) 395–7783.