

Ivy Tech celebrating renovation of former hospital in Indianapolis

It's called the miracle on Fall Creek Parkway.

At least that's how the new tenants of the old St. Vincent Hospital building see it.

Ivy Tech Community College has moved into the 100-year-old building, which sits near Fall Creek Parkway and Illinois Street, and will celebrate with a ribbon-cutting today and a community open house Saturday.

The move almost didn't happen because Ivy Tech officials feared the building would be too expensive to rehabilitate. But a committee found a compromise: Save parts of the historic hospital while rebuilding much of it with wider hallways and bigger classrooms.

The Illinois Fall Creek Center, across Illinois Street from Ivy Tech's North Meridian Center, now houses 29 classrooms, a cafeteria with room for 250, gathering space for students and two large rooms for community use.

"I think that I have characterized this whole process as the miracle on Fall Creek," Ivy Tech President Tom Snyder said.

The transition is significant, Ivy Tech officials say, partly because the school carries out a mission similar to the hospital's. But instead of caring for the community through medical aid, the school will serve people who are looking for an education.

The move into the new building will enable even more students to pursue an education at the Near-Northside campus.

Enrollment in Indianapolis has quadrupled to more than 25,000, and the school is "busting at the seams," said Kaye Walter, chancellor of Ivy Tech's Central Indiana Region.

Last year, Ivy Tech opened the Julia M. Carson Learning Resource Center at 27th and Illinois streets, which included a parking garage, a library and places for students to get tutoring, but no classrooms.

The school also is renovating the old Stouffer Hotel building on Meridian Street, which will be home to Ivy Tech's corporate

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college and culinary school.

The \$50 million renovation of the St. Vincent building adds not only much-needed space for general education classes, but also more places for students to meet and study.

Max Russell, president of the Student Government Association, said students already are enjoying the building, which has been open for about two weeks.

"The amount of space for students is incredible," he said. "We have an actual cafeteria this time."

Another unique aspect: little touches of history throughout.

The hospital opened in 1913 and became low-income housing in the 1970s. It had been vacant since 2003.

The facade of the building was preserved, along with such elements as the grand staircase, the flooring and outdoor lampposts.

A display about the building's history is inside so students and others who visit can learn about its significance.

The school also is collecting stories from people who remember the old St. Vincent Hospital. They're not sure how they'll use the stories, but the school thought it was important to ensure they remain as part of the building's legacy.

"We hope that (the community) will come to

the building and use the building," she said, "and be a part of this historic landmark with us."

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Ivy Tech's \$50 million renovation of the old St. Vincent Hospital included preserving historic features, such as the brick facade (above) and lampposts and staircase (below), as well as adding amenities such as student lounge areas (bottom photo) and a cafeteria. The building, which opened in 1913, now has 29 classrooms -- providing much-needed space as enrollment in Indy has quadrupled to more than 25,000 -- and two rooms for use by the community, which is invited to an open house Saturday. / Michelle Pemberton / The Star

Building history

The St. Vincent Hospital building on Fall Creek Parkway has gone through several transitions in its 100-year history. Here are some highlights:

1911: Construction on the hospital begins.

1913: The hospital opens.

1974: The hospital closes. The building is later renovated and turned into low-income housing.

2003: The building closes, and the federal government takes over.

2004: The city of Indianapolis acquires the building.

2006: Ivy Tech Community College buys the building from the city for \$1.

2009: Parts of the building are taken down to prepare for the renovation.

2010: Construction begins.

Saturday: Ivy Tech will open the building for community tours and family activities from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. The school also is collecting stories from people who remember the hospital. To share a story, visit www.ivytech.edu/stvincent.

Source: Ivy Tech Community College