

\$29 million renovation set for Palmetto High School

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Linda Rodriguez Bernfeld

Next summer, the Miami-Dade School System will hire architectural and engineering firms to draw up the plans for the \$29 million overhaul of Palmetto High School. The project is funded in the 2015-16 fiscal year.

"I think I can speak for every stakeholder, we are all thrilled that Palmetto will get the face-lift it deserves," says principal Dr. Allison Harley. "More than the face-lift, new buildings that will put us into the 21st Century and a 21st Century education."

School board member Dr. Larry Feldman says the community has waited a long time for the improvements.

"There is no doubt that this transformation to a state-of-the-art school will enhance and inspire our students and teachers," he says. "And with the technology, arts and sciences, Cambridge and iPrep advanced programs, our students will benefit tremendously. While their college, AP and academic standings are among the best, having appropriate tools and programs for teachers and students to utilize will add to their acquired knowledge and skill sets."



Faculty, staff and student leaders have already been informed on the concepts in the renovations. Village Mayor Cindy Lerner has also been briefed. The project is being funded by the school bond issue passed a few years ago.

"We have seen a couple of different plans," Harley says. "There are conceptual ideas. They are trying to go to green with it, but nothing definitive. They want to work with the stakeholders at the school." So far, plans call for demolishing the main building and re-orienting the school to put the main entrance to the school on Southwest 120th Street rather than 118th Street. Harley says that while a couple of buildings will be demolished and replacements built, others will be renovated.

"Our auditorium, which is very large, will remain, but it will undergo a complete renovation to make it a more of a state-of-the-art performance center."

Lerner says anything that has been built since the gym was erected will remain, including the science wing and the media center, though both will be upgraded. The athletic fields will continue as they now exist, but new dining facilities are planned, along with new parking lots.

Overall, nine buildings are slated for replacement or renovation, subject to an assessment and approval by the Florida Department of Education.

Throughout the project, classes will continue at Palmetto. Harley says the school system has a good history of conducting these type of projects while the school remains open.

At no time will there be a disruption to the instructional schedule," she says. "For a year we may lose some parking, and they may remove of all our portable classrooms."

Lerner says the school system has invited the community to participate in the design.

“They suggested that we go out and look at the newer schools,” she says. “I have been told to look at Terra.”

Since the project is in the planning stages, the PTSA has created a parent liaison to keep up to date on the plans.