



Beyond the newly constructed section of E Hall, workers continue renovation on the old portion of the building at Manhattan High.

Staff photos by Rod Mikinski

MANHATTAN HIGH SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

## 'A new school on the old foundation'

### New wings of MHS to be ready when students return in August

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The most important phase of the biggest construction job in at least a half-century for the local public school system is roaring toward a key deadline.

Construction workers are gutting and rebuilding Manhattan High School's West Campus this summer in time to let students back in a month from today.

When they walk in, the students might have a hard time recognizing the place they left in May.

"It's a new school built on the old foundation," Principal Terry McCarty said.

Yes, the main hallways still run east-west and are still named A to E.

Yes, the gyms are in the back. But the front doors underneath the overhang? Gone. Replaced by a glass entryway with a wide staircase. The old student commons area? Gone. Replaced by a wide walkway flanked by the future library on one side and the future cafeteria on the other. D Hall? E Hall? Gutted and entirely redone, with new classrooms. The bathrooms? They work.

Roughly 300 construction workers have been at it nearly round-the-clock every day since school let out, according to project manager Dean Youngers. They have demolished and completely redesigned and rebuilt the insides of the north half of the building. On the south half, B Hall has been entirely demolished, and workers were set to knock down A Hall this week.

That's to say nothing of the complete replacement of the energy, utility and communications systems in the guts of the building, none of which are really visible.

"People call this a remodel," Youngers said as he gave a tour to The Mercury last week. "It's really a total renovation."

Tapping a support pillar in what used to be D Hall but is being transformed into the cafeteria, he said, "The concrete structure. That's all that was left from the old building."

The only major portions of the building



#### MHS renovation

The new and improved Manhattan High includes completely new wings (like the two orange structures on the right) and renovations to existing ones.

Illustration courtesy city of Manhattan

not being substantially altered, he said, are C Hall, which is the second-floor structure above the middle of the building, and the gyms. C Hall was added in 1979-80; the rest of the building had been constructed in 1954-55.

Youngers is employed by the school district to coordinate the job, along with Carl Stanfield, project superintendent for Adolfsen & Peterson, the general contractor. The plans for the job are a stack about three feet high, Youngers said. Nearly 1,100 workers have been on the job, Youngers said.

Just a flavor of the detail involved:

- Engineers did hundreds of studies of the movement of the sun in relation to the building, said Brad Marks, vice president of Smith & Boucher Engineers, an Olathe firm working on the project. Inside lighting adjusts as the sunlight changes.

- In a pinch, workers dug out part of the floor of a room so as to be able to reuse that space with newer, larger power equipment, Marks said.

Had they not been able to do that, the whole project could have been backed up. It's still on time, nearly a year ahead of the original timetable.

- New exterior doors were designed with both lock indicators and sensors to



A grand three-story atrium defines the new front entrance of MHS.

indicate that they're actually closed, so nobody could prop them open and get away with it.

And of course, the timing of each subcontractor's work had to be nailed down because they all have to fall in sequence, and all of it has to be fit into the needs of the school's academic calendar.

"You can't think of the whole thing at once," he said. "You'll go nuts. You have to take it one bite at a time."

Youngers and Stanfield both say the project is a perfect example of how to do things right. Engineers, city building code officials, school board members, students, teachers and administrators generally say the same thing.

"It's first-class," said MHS Principal Terry McCarty. "It's really unbelievable how much everyone has worked together. It's a privilege to be involved."

Youngers credited the hundreds of workers who have done whatever's necessary to keep the project on track. They've had to sweat through record-breaking heat this summer while they did the work.

The pre-existing Manhattan High School building had about 276,000 square feet. They've demolished and remodeled



### Still true to my high school

Wandering around the hot, loud construction project that is Manhattan High last week, I kept hearing an echo of something a school board member said awhile back: "This is not your father's high school."

True. And false. Let me explain:

Walking down one of the gleaming hallways in the new addition, I had no clue where I was. How do I get from here to gym class? No idea. There's a lot of glass, high ceilings and a lot of blue. The front entryway is nothing like it used to be. Where I used to take U.S. History is now evidently going to be part of a library, and where I used to go to the counselor's office is now the cafeteria. What used to be the cafeteria is — what? I can't remember. I'm lost.

It's easy to get disoriented in the place, and it's easy to get wistful. I'm prone to that, anyway. What used to be my school — Manhattan High, home of the Indians — isn't there anymore. Dammit, they bulldozed my memories.

But that's a little too simple, a little too clean. The complicated truth is that there are still things to connect us old-timers (Class of '86 rules!) to the place.

To start with, the building sits in the same place, and the halls are still oriented in the same direction. They're still called A to E, with the shop classes outside in "F" Hall. (Well, F will be connected to the main building soon, but you get the idea.) "C" Hall is still basically above the middle of the building, and the stairways leading there are unchanged.

Second, some of the landmarks remain: The gyms are still in the same spot. The dungeon locker rooms will be redone, and the south gym is going to get a wood floor. But you'll still go to the same place to see a basketball game. Likewise, the auditorium and the Little Theater are in their familiar homes. For that matter, as different as the entrance is, it's still more or less where it was before, and it leads to a wide corridor that maintains a bit of the vibe of the old student commons.

At the moment, the familiar orange-ish brick façade of the front entrance remains, though they're going to cover that over with the same exterior as the new additions. The parking lots are still there, the football practice field and tennis courts are in the back, and so on.

My oldest son, a junior this fall at MHS, got to go to school last year in basically the same school I did a generation ago, with the addition of a little carpet. By the time he leaves, he'll also experience the entirely new MHS.

It'll be his high school then. That's fine. It's the way of the world: I'm the dad, not the kid anymore.

Despite that, Mrs. School Board Member, I'd respectfully disagree: It IS still my high school, too.



A worker carries sheet rock through the new cafeteria. The cafeteria will have a glass wall on the north side plus several doors allowing students to eat in the courtyard seen in the background.