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## University campus sees \$5.5M renovation

By [Rachel Weick](#)

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A university's satellite campus is undergoing extensive renovations to create a more productive environment for students, help increase enrollment in the area and prepare for the future.

Western Michigan University said last month that it will renovate its Graduate Center Beltline in Grand Rapids, at 2333 East Beltline Ave. SE.

The Beltline campus closed last month after the 2014 fall semester for the renovations and should re-open by August for the fall semester.

### The renovation

The \$5.5-million renovation includes several parts: updating the heating and cooling system; new lighting; wider hallways; modernizing the furnishings; a computer lounge; and complying with standard requirements for older facilities.

Joe Wilson, director of conferences and facilities for WMU Grand Rapids, said the renovations to the Beltline campus will provide the opportunity for growth.

“With updated space and accommodations, we’re looking forward to creating a more productive work environment for our current students and increasing future enrollment at our Grand Rapids locations,” Wilson said.

Roxanne Buhl, regional director at WMU Grand Rapids, said another piece of the renovation includes adding active-learning classrooms, which have a two-fold benefit.

“The one aspect is making sure our students who are going through the program have the experience of faculty teaching them in an active-learning environment, but then the other side of it is, many of these individuals are either in the teaching profession, headed in that direction or they are educational leaders in our community,” Buhl said. “They then have an opportunity to try these tools and see them as well.”

### Long-term setup

Although the square footage of the building will remain the same, Buhl said overall usable space will expand based on the new design developed by the architecture firm [Fishbeck, Thompson, Carr & Huber](#).

WMU's in-house architects and construction management team also contributed to the design.

Beckering Construction in Grand Rapids is the project's contractor.

The building will house 40,000 square feet of usable space after the renovations.

WMU's Beltline campus has had regular updating to the facility in terms of technology and furnishings over the years, but the renovation project is the first extensive upgrade to the facility since the university purchased the building in 1990.

Originally prompted by the need to update the heating and cooling system, Buhl said the major project developed as part of what's happening today with learning spaces.

"We started to look at the learning environment for students and how we could make a more productive work environment for current students, increase the space and the setup of the building for future enrollments, as well with the planned programming that is coming the Grand Rapids area — and to make sure that overall the site was ready for the next 15 to 20 years."

### Relocating students

Students who typically attend classes at the Beltline campus will attend WMU's downtown Grand Rapids campus during the 2015 spring and summer semesters.

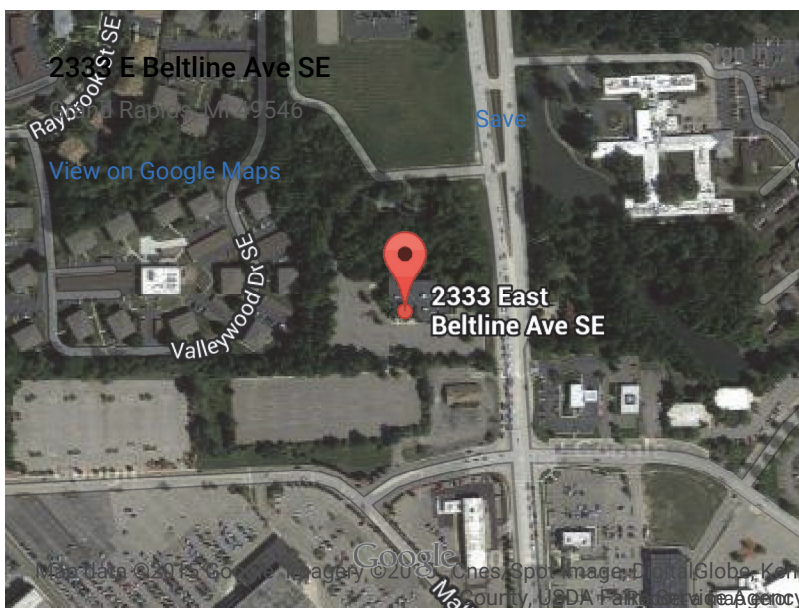
"We are really happy that the downtown parking services have really welcomed the students in," Buhl said. "We've made sure that we scheduled programming in the building in a way that is efficient for students.

"A lot of students have brought up that one of the things they are enjoying about being all merged together is seeing everyone from the different programs."

### Degree programs

Between the two Grand Rapids campuses, WMU offers more than 20 graduate degree programs — such as educational leadership, engineering management and manufacturing engineering — designed for working adults who are continuing their education and professional development.

Buhl added that WMU's Grand Rapids campuses are also anticipating adding food service administration and interdisciplinary health services at the undergraduate level in the upcoming year.





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