

Union Rebuilds:

Creating 14 state-of-the-art campus apartment buildings



The challenge: To make a 10-year plan for residential life improvements into a 10-month plan, and have designs ready to begin immediate construction.

The solution: An aggressive approach that will result in 14 new buildings by fall 2008, housing more than 700 students. The new buildings will rise on grounds the Hurt and

Watters complexes previously occupied.

"Today in what seems almost beyond comprehension, two weeks and three days after a tornado destroyed large portions of this campus, we gather together to give thanks to God for a new beginning and the opportunity to build again," Union President David S. Dockery said in a chapel service preceding the groundbreaking

ceremony on Feb. 22.

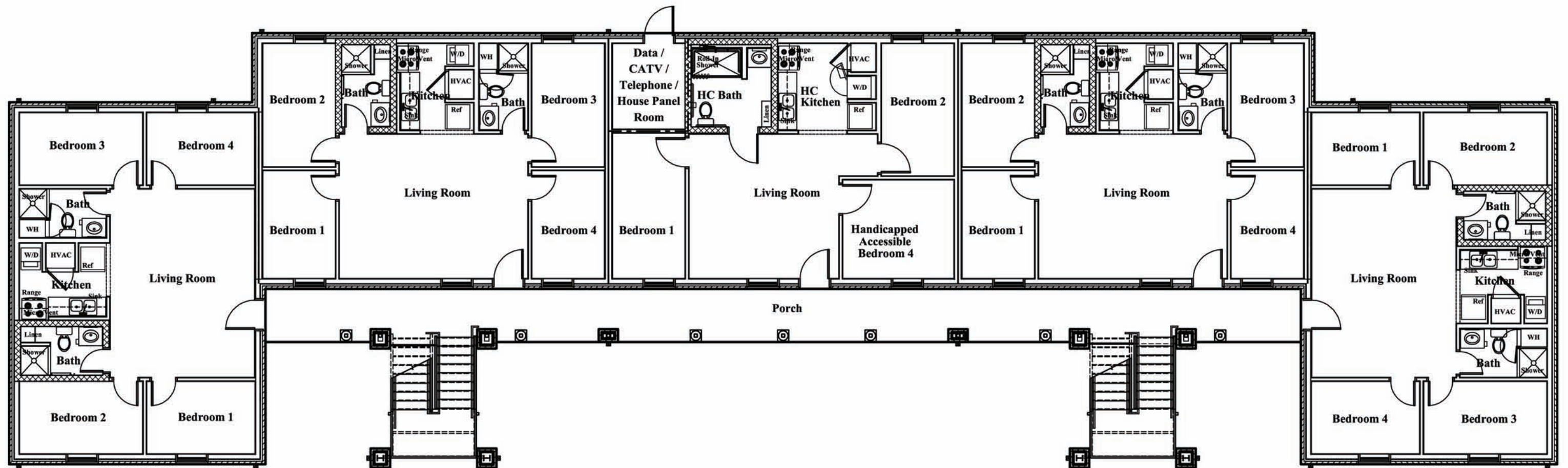
"We gather to not only continue to give thanks for God's providence and all that he has done for us in the aftermath of Feb. 5, but to set a course for the future of this university," Dockery continued. "We move forward together by the help and the grace of God. It is impossible for it to happen in any other way."

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Gary Taylor (left), former trustee chairman, received the Craig Service Award at the April 3 Trustee Dinner for his leadership in the design and rebuilding process.



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Larger living spaces, stronger safety features

The apartment-style rooms in the new housing complex, designed by a team of architects and engineers from TLM Associates, will feature four private bedrooms, two bathrooms, a living room, a kitchenette and a washer/dryer in each suite. Each building in the complex will contain 40, 48 or 56 bedrooms. All bathrooms in the bottom-floor apartments will be reinforced to provide storm shelters for students.

Planners say construction standards for West Tennessee will be exceeded. Each new building will meet the hurricane-inspired codes in effect for coastal Florida. Those regulations require buildings to withstand winds stronger than 100-miles-per-hour.

“We’re going to do everything we can to make these buildings as safe and secure as possible,” Dockery said.

The complex will ultimately consist of four “quads” with four buildings in each quad. Initial plans call for the completion of two quads, plus three buildings in each of the two remaining quads.

A men’s commons and a women’s commons building will complete each of the final two quads after the rest of the buildings are finished. All rooms will open to the inside of the quad, providing added security.

Dockery said the new student housing complex will have “a very handsome look” similar to the appearances of Jennings Hall and White Hall on the west side of the Union campus.

Total cost for the project is estimated to exceed \$30 million.

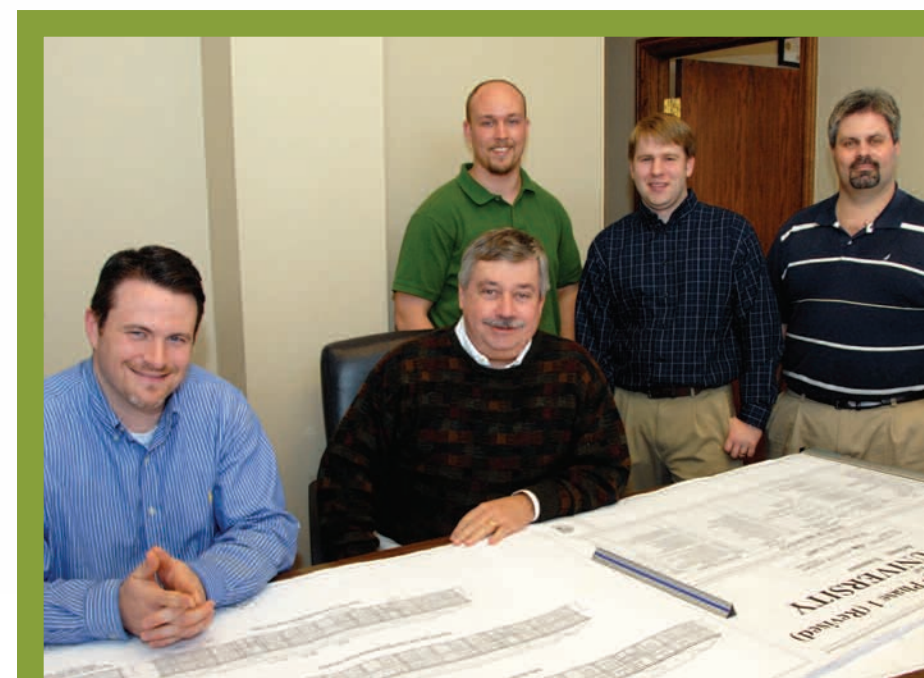
New students can apply for new rooms

Incoming freshman and transfers this fall will occupy some of the new rooms, but they’ll have to apply quickly to secure space.

“Those applications will be considered in the chronological order in which they are received,” said Rich Grimm, vice president for enrollment services. “But we fully expect there will be new students moving into brand new rooms at the start of fall semester.”

When completed, the 14 new halls will contain a few more rooms than had been available in the Hurt and Watters complexes. Each suite also will be slightly larger, providing students with added living area.

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Frank Wagster (center) led a design team at Jackson’s TLM Associates. The team had only a few days to draw plans for the new residence life complex.



Photo courtesy of Wayne Holmes

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Student input drove the design

Dean of Students Kimberly Thornbury says focus group data about what students need in new housing had been gathered prior to the tornado. It was part of the planning for a hotel-style building that architects determined would take too long to construct in Union's current situation.

But Thornbury says many of those wishes have been incorporated into the new apartment-style buildings.

"The three biggest things at the top of the wish list are adding the second bathroom to each suite, the new washer/dryer feature (in each suite) and storm shelters on the first floor," Thornbury said. "They also wanted new buildings to have more of a traditional collegiate look on the outside."

She said better lighting and soundproofing were also common requests that are now built into the new designs.

Dedication and Groundbreaking services attract more than 1,000 students, faculty and staff

During the dedication service for the new project in Savage Chapel Feb. 22, President David S. Dockery said Union's circumstances reflected the biblical story of Nehemiah, who helped the Jews in Jerusalem rebuild the city's walls.

"The walls were crumbled, and the people wept," Dockery said "And our campus crumbled, and we wept."

But God's people came together, trusted the Lord to provide the resources, planned strategically and overcame disappointment, and completed the rebuilding project in 52 days – one of the most amazing architectural feats of the ancient Near East, Dockery said.

"The people realized that the work had been done with the help of our God," Dockery said. "And we embark today on

a very aggressive plan to see at least portions of this new residence life facility completed by the fall of 2008, making it possible once again for us to experience a sense of community all over this campus."

Following the dedication service, Union administrators, trustees, faculty, staff and students walked to the site of the new complex for a groundbreaking ceremony.

"Even as we begin new dwelling places today, there is an ultimate dwelling place beyond this," Dockery told the Union community.

Union Trustees Bill Dement, Bob Campbell and Harry Smith, as well as Kimberly Thornbury, dean of students, and Gary Carter, senior vice president for business and financial services, participated in the ceremonial groundbreaking ceremony with President Dockery. ✚

