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Durkee, Brown, Viveiros & Werenfels Architects to complete 14,000 s/f

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Sophia Academy - the only middle school in Providence focused specifically on girls from low income homes - is moving back to the Elmwood neighborhood where Founder Mary Reilly, began the school 12 years ago. June 17th marked the groundbreaking ceremony, where school leaders and students celebrated with supporters that included U.S. Senator Whitehouse and Providence Mayor Taveras.

The school purchased the former ALP alternative high school building at 582 Elmwood Ave. from the city and hopes to move into its new home during early 2014. Originally built as the Industrial Trust Bank in 1948, this two-story (plus basement) masonry building was changed to an educational use in 1990 and has since been used as a high school and by a construction company as a field office.

The 14,000 s/f building will receive minor interior alterations including abatement, partition relocation and new bathrooms. Durkee, Brown, Viveiros & Werenfels Architects, a Providence firm that specializes in the adaptive reuse of historic properties, was chosen as the architect for the project.

The 28,000 s/f site is located on a commercial street and borders a historic medium-density neighborhood. According to Head of School Gigi DiBello, the Elmwood Ave. location is close to where most of the school's students, families and alumnae currently live. She said the new location will allow Sophia to offer programs and activities not only to its students, but potentially to other middle school age girls who live in the area.

To fund the purchase and renovation of the building, the school has embarked on a \$1.5 million "Wisdom to Dream" capital campaign co-chaired by Rhode Island philanthropists Suzanne Murray and Anne Szostak. Murray noted that capital campaigns often begin with a "silent" phase where potential donors are approached to gauge support and hopefully secure at least some donations to serve as a foundation. The response to Sophia during the silent phase has been "overwhelming," she said. Murray announced that more than \$1.4 million has already been raised in gifts and pledges without the benefit of any publicity. The school will continue to raise funds to meet its goal, as well as to pay for new classroom furniture and other equipment.

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