

\$4.4M project to revamp Haddon Avenue in Camden

Updated: MAY 26, 2016 — 8:16 PM EDT



An artist rendering of a \$4.4 million rehab project that will transform the area around Lourdes Hospital from Vesper Boulevard to White Horse Pike.

by **Allison Steele**, Staff Writer

A stretch of Haddon Avenue leading into Camden west from Collingswood is set to be revamped as part of a \$4.4 million road-improvement project, Camden County and city officials said Thursday.

Financed by the county and with \$1.1 million in federal highway funding, the project involves reconstructing the road between Vesper Boulevard and the White Horse Pike, building a drainage and storm water management system, and installing new traffic signals, lighting, bike lanes, and disabled-accessible curbs.

The renovations, scheduled to be finished by January, will build on similar improvements made this year to a part of Haddon Avenue running from Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center to Euclid Street.

"It's projects such as this that open the door to Camden," Mayor Dana Redd said Thursday, speaking in front of Lourdes at a news conference discussing the plans.

Alexander J. Hatala, president and CEO of Lourdes Health System, said the road project would coincide with broad plans to renovate the hospital, including its facade.

"The best years are right ahead of us today," he said of Lourdes' 66-year history on Haddon Avenue.

Hatala would not confirm whether the iconic Our Lady of Lourdes statue atop the hospital would remain in place throughout the renovation, but he said it would stay "in Camden."

The section of Haddon Avenue to be refurbished now includes the future site of Uncommon Schools Camden Prep, a public-charter hybrid Renaissance school that will eventually hold 800 students in grades K through 8 in a new three-story building.

Once built, it will be the city's second Uncommon school; currently Uncommon operates an elementary school out of Camden's Bonsall School building.

Renaissance schools guarantee seats to every child who lives in the neighborhood, and the new Uncommon school will serve children in Parkside and the surrounding area.

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