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International School of San Francisco Breaks Ground on Major Campus Renovation

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$40+ Million "Campaign for a Bold Future" Project to Transform Hayes Valley Campus

The International School of San Francisco has officially broken ground on a comprehensive renovation project that will transform its main campus at 150 Oak Street in Hayes Valley. The milestone, announced by general contractor Cahill Contractors last week, marks the beginning of what the school calls its "Campaign for a Bold Future" – an ambitious initiative to reimagine educational spaces for its diverse international community.

Project Scope and Timeline

The construction project consists of a full renovation of the west wing of the private school, encompassing seven floors and 64,000 square feet. The work includes structural improvements, new stairs and skylights, upgraded HVAC systems, and enhanced interiors throughout. The eastern portion of the campus, comprising six floors and 111,000 square feet, will remain occupied during the school year, with mechanical, electrical, and plumbing upgrades and new windows scheduled over two summers.

Construction is scheduled to begin in June 2025 and continue for 12 months, with the school's goal of completing renovations by the end of 2026. The careful phasing ensures minimal disruption to the educational program while the school continues operations.

The renovation will create purpose-built, redesigned spaces for high school students, featuring a welcoming separate entrance to the campus. New facilities will include modern science, technology, and design tech spaces, flexible classrooms, a central Learning Commons, new gathering spaces, and a Wellness Center. The building's design will encourage movement and interaction among students and teachers, fostering connection and community.

The project reflects International's commitment to staying at the forefront of educational innovation. The school, founded in 1962 and formerly known as French American International School until 2023, is recognized as a pioneer in bilingual and international education. It was the first school west of the Mississippi and the fourth in the United States to adopt the prestigious International Baccalaureate program.

A Legacy of Growth and Adaptation

International is San Francisco's oldest and largest bilingual school, serving over 1,067 students from prekindergarten through 12th grade. The school represents over 50 countries in its student body, creating a rich multicultural learning environment where students gain firsthand insights into global citizenship.

The main campus in Hayes Valley is located blocks from City Hall, the War Memorial Opera Building, SFJAZZ, and major transit stations. The modern six-story building features bright classrooms with dynamic city views and is topped with 630 solar modules that have produced more than one billion watt-hours of power to date.

Partnership with Established Contractor

The school has partnered with Cahill Contractors, a San Francisco-based general contractor with over 100 years of experience in the Bay Area. Cahill specializes in residential, education, civic, healthcare, and commercial construction and has been building since 1911. The woman- and family-owned company has extensive experience with educational projects and occupied rehabilitation, according to the company's website.

In its announcement, Cahill Contractors emphasized the alignment between their values and International's mission. "This project represents more than just a physical transformation. It reflects International's commitment to educational innovation, cultural diversity, and community impact – values that deeply align with our own," the company stated on LinkedIn.

The project timeline shows planning, with the preliminary budget and project approved by the Board of Trustees in September 2024. Key milestones included retaining the project manager and architect in September 2024, selecting the general contractor in December 2024, and completing schematic design by December 5, 2024.

The renovation represents a significant investment in the school's future, though specific financial details have not been publicly disclosed. The school's current tuition is approximately $60,020 for private students, reflecting its position among the top-tier independent schools in San Francisco.

The renovation project embodies International's evolution while maintaining its core mission. As the school's historian noted, a remarkable aspect of The International School of San Francisco is its ability to balance change and stability – changing names four times and locations twelve times while remaining dedicated to the same guiding principles since 1962.

