

CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS

October 3, 2023

Nonprofits & Philanthropy

Detroit's 1st new Catholic chapel in more than 50 years rising at Loyola

By Sherri Welch

Loyola High School has broken ground on what will be the first new Catholic chapel or church built in Detroit in more than half a century.

The 200-seat chapel is the centerpiece of a \$9 million campaign launched by the private Catholic school for boys on the city's northwest side. The campaign will also fund the construction of a new welcome center and student courtyard, scholarships and pay increases to help attract and retain teachers.

The goal is to cement the school's presence in the high-poverty, under-served neighborhood at Fenkell Avenue and Pinehurst Street, said President Dave Smith, who has led Loyola since 2019.

While the projects underway will benefit the school and its students, they are also designed to benefit the neighborhood as well, he said.

During the pandemic, Loyola used its kitchen and commons area to launch emergency distribution of more than 2,000 meals a week to help meet need in the area.

"We're trying to reach out to more to the community with the new welcome center... and we have facilities we could make available to the community, if appropriate," Smith said. "We've tried to be good neighbors; we want to continue to do that. We've chosen to stay right here on this campus. This is where our young men are, and we're looking forward to serving the families and sons that come to us here."

Founded in 1993 and co-sponsored by the Archdiocese of Detroit and the Midwest Province of Jesuits, Loyola High School is one of only three Catholic high schools still operating in the city, it said in a release.



It occupies the old St. Francis de Sales School, which opened in 1928 and grew to an enrollment of more than 1,000 students before its closure in 1971.

The new St. Peter Claver Chapel will be built on the school's campus on the same footprint as the former St. Peter Claver Church which was closed in 2018 after the roof caved in.

Loyola broke ground on the new chapel, a new courtyard between the chapel and school and a welcome center in mid-September as part of \$6.5 million in capital projects, three years after planning and community engagement began.

Loyola staff and students will use the new chapel for daily prayers and monthly masses, and the St. Peter Claver Parish — created through the 2005 merger of the St. Francis de Sales and Precious Blood parishes — will bring Sunday masses back to the campus after holding them on the nearby Marygrove campus for the past six years. The new chapel will also include administrative space for the parish's pastoral associate and St. Vincent de Paul ministry which provides food and clothing to those in need, Smith said.

"With the new chapel, we're (also) open to the idea of holding appropriate community events if the opportunity arises."



Loyola is working with the parish and community to offer programs for senior citizens, concerts and speaker series, Smith said.

The welcome center is expected to be completed by fall 2024 and the chapel and courtyard by early 2025, he said.

Wyandotte-based Thomas Roberts Architects did the project design, and Fairview Construction Services LLC in Wixom is the general contractor.

Beyond the capital projects, the capital campaign will provide \$1.5 million for Loyola scholarships for the school's 150 students in grade 9-12, Smith said, noting that 100% of graduates have been accepted into college for the past 13 years. Loyola's student body is completely African American, and 90% of students are from the city of Detroit. Very few are actually Catholic, Smith said.

"We're here to serve a mission, to help young men become successful."

The campaign will also provide \$1 million to maintain pay increases, "healthy" medical and pension benefits already put in place for current teachers and anticipate the future costs of competing for teaching talent, Smith said.

Loyola is exploring new market tax credits as a possible funding source for the capital aspects of the project but is raising dollars to fund it entirely through private contributions if needed, he said.

Since launching the quiet phase of the campaign in 2021, it has raised \$6.5 million of its \$9 million goal, with lead gifts of \$1 million or more from donors including the family of John and Margaret Clark, Raymond M. & Jane E. Cracchiolo Foundation and the Wayne and Joan Webber Foundation.

The long list of contributors to the campaign includes: Former DTE Energy Co. Chairman and CEO Tony Earley Jr., an honorary chair of the Loyola campaign, and his wife Sarah Earley, founding chair of the Belle Isle Conservancy; retired Marygrove College President Glenda Price; Mary Blaha and George Blaha, play-by-play announcer for the Detroit Pistons and Michigan State University football; Detroit Today host and anchor Stephen Henderson; Loyola board member Terry Rhadigan, vice president of communications and corporate giving for General Motors, and his wife Andrea; Pulte Family Charitable Foundation; Lloyd & Mabel Johnson Foundation; DeRoy Testamentary Foundation and many others.