

# Ambitious capital campaign will fund campus renovations

By [Elizabeth Hockerman](#) , of SBT

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Marquette University High School plans to embark on a building project this spring that will solidify its commitment as the anchor of the Merrill Park neighborhood.

Marquette High is undergoing a capital campaign to raise more than \$22 million, which will cover a \$17 million building project and establish a \$5 million endowment for future teacher hires, training and continued education, according to Pat Dunphy of Cannon & Dunphy, S.C., Brookfield and chair of the capital campaign.

The building project will include two phases. Phase I will include a new chapel built in what is currently a parking lot on the southeast side of the property, the tear down of a former Jesuit residence to build a new south addition with classrooms on the southwest side of the property and improvements to the athletic facilities.

The cost of Phase I will be about \$12 million, Dunphy said.

Phase II will be approximately \$5 million that will renovate the third-floor gymnasium in the main building into classrooms, remodel the guidance and reception areas and upgrade the science labs and science rooms, which are still in their original state from 1925.

The \$5 million mission endowment will ensure for the next 150 years that Marquette High can hire new faculty and train them in Ignatian formation programs while offering professional development opportunities to existing faculty members, according to the Rev. Warren Sazama, president of Marquette University High School.

Currently, the capital campaign has raised \$12.12 million of the \$22 million goal.

Milwaukee-based Eppstein Uhen Architects developed the building project design, and Milwaukee-based CG Schmidt Inc. is the general contractor for the project.

Dunphy said the leadership group for the project estimates a groundbreaking this spring, depending on sufficient funds committed directly to the buildings.

"I am pretty confident at the end of it, it will be the single most significant educational improvement in the history of the school since building the building in 1924, because it will effect virtually every program in the school and every student's educational experience, religious experience will be improved," said the Rev. John Belmonte, principal of Marquette University High School.

Bob Greene, executive director of the Merrill Park Neighborhood Association, is excited for the expansion because it means the school will stay in the neighborhood.

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The Merrill Park neighborhood went through some difficult times when many affluent and middle-class people moved to the suburbs in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, Greene said. The neighborhood became occupied by renters and transient residents. Marquette High and Greene, along with his neighbors, decided to form the Merrill Park Neighborhood Association in an attempt to revive the neighborhood.

“The school at the time had some strategic planning pressure to move to the suburbs or to the central city, and we had neighborhood meetings at resident homes,” Greene said. “Fr. Tom Doyle came to some of the meetings and wanted to form a relationship.”

The Merrill Park Neighborhood Association formed as a 501(c)(3) in 1991 and currently has its office in the former Jesuit residence at Marquette High. The office will be relocating once the building project breaks ground.

Together, Marquette High and the Merrill Park residents have been working hard to raise funds for the redevelopment of Merrill Park, to advocate for homeownership and to reduce crime.

“One of the most successful projects we had is called the Partners Project, where we got together with the school to improve the neighborhood,” Greene said.

The Partners Project buys blighted properties, and Marquette High alums, including Dan Druml of Paul Davis Restoration in Milwaukee and Dick Sherer, an architect with Deep River Partners in Milwaukee, are helping to restore the old homes and put them back on the market.

The results have been well worth the sweat. According to the 1990 census, less than 20 percent of residents in the Merrill Park neighborhood were homeowners. Today, the neighborhood is experiencing 60-percent homeownership and crime is down by an extraordinary amount, Greene said.

“The Jesuits have an urban commitment, it is part of their philosophy as teachers and educators,” Greene said. “Perception is reality, people don’t like to think that, but it is and with this kind of commitment, the reality is this is a nice place to live.”

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