

Bishop Morlino approves proceeding with Bishop O'Connor Center redevelopment project

Around the Diocese

Written by Mary C. Uhler, Catholic Herald Staff

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MADISON -- After consulting with diocesan boards, Bishop Robert C. Morlino has approved going forward with the proposed redevelopment project for the Bishop O'Connor Center (BOC).

Bishop Morlino met with the Diocesan Finance Council and College of Consultors (priests charged with advising the bishop) on Friday and Saturday, Feb. 20 and 21, respectively. The attendees of each body unanimously consented under canon law to authorize Bishop Morlino to make a decision on whether to proceed with the redevelopment project as proposed by Gorman & Company.

After these meetings concluded, Bishop Morlino approved proceeding with the project for the Bishop O'Connor Center as a mixed-use project, including 53 market-rate residential apartments and commercial space that includes religious use by the Diocese of Madison, Catholic Charities, Catholic Herald, Relevant Radio, and Catholic Mutual.

Msr. James Bartylla, vicar general of the diocese, commented, "The redevelopment project for the Bishop O'Connor Catholic Pastoral Center allows the Diocese of Madison to reduce its occupancy costs as it remains at an historical site that maintains the legacy of Holy Name Seminary and preserves the Catholic identity of a beautiful campus on the west side of Madison that appeals to the community and the neighborhood.

"The project will offer its apartment residents a unique living environment in a historical building renewed with modern improvements and conveniences amidst a stunning park-like landscape with convenient access to the shops and amenities of the west side of Madison."

In June of 2014, Bishop Morlino announced "news of great joy" at a diocesan staff meeting that the Diocese of Madison would have its diocesan offices stay at the BOC along with a proposed housing community being developed there.

At that time, Bishop Morlino expressed his gratitude to Gorman & Company for their "very, very hard work" in putting together a plan for the BOC. "I cannot begin to tell you how happy I am," said Bishop Morlino.

Msr. Mike Burke, pastor of St. Maria Goretti Parish in Madison and a member of the Diocesan Finance Council, said about the decision, "Wow! This is wonderful news. I think the reaction to this plan will be overwhelmingly positive."

'Sacred space'

Monsignor Burke lived at Holy Name Seminary, the former BOC, for 19 years. He served as the seminary rector for 13 years. He considers the building "sacred space," pointing out that the chapel is the central point of the building. "People were hoping and praying that the chapel could be saved," he said.

"I couldn't be more happy for the seminary alumni, parents, faculty, benefactors, and many priests who served here that we are able to keep the building, chapel, and grounds intact. There are so many people who identify with this building, Catholics and non-Catholics," he said.

The spire of the center dominates the west side of Madison, and the regular ringing of the bells can be heard from miles away.

Monsignor Burke said he "can't thank Gary Gorman enough" for everything he did to save the building. "It's a great day for our diocese," he said.

Redevelopment of BOC

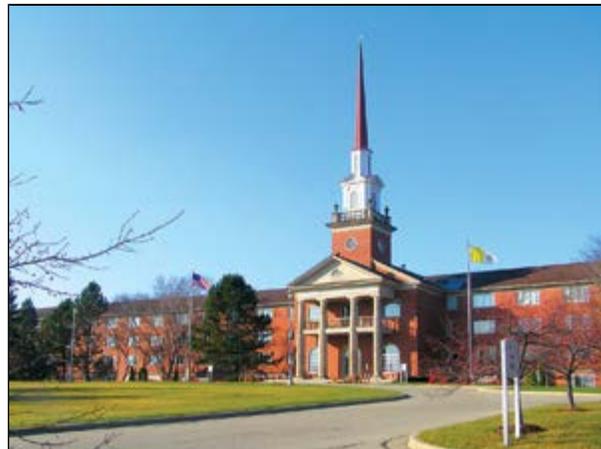
In 2013, the Diocese of Madison announced its entrance into an agreement with Gorman & Company to study the redevelopment of the BOC in order to make better use of the property, provide for capital improvements, and continue to provide for the important ministries of the diocese.

Gorman & Company explored various renovation plans and funding options. After numerous analyses and configuration options, a refined redevelopment plan was proposed for the BOC to fit more closely the needs of the diocese and Gorman & Company.

To both parties' satisfaction, an updated mixed-use development plan is envisioned for the property, comprised of approximately 53 multi-family residential apartment units, continuation of the current diocesan offices and chapel on site, including Catholic Charities and other affiliated organizations, as well as maintenance of the beautiful grounds that make this a hallmark property on the west side of Madison.

This allows the Diocese of Madison to maintain its presence in the single most visible and recognizable Catholic structure in the 11-county diocese,

BREAKING NEWS...



The Bishop O'Connor Catholic Pastoral Center in Madison, formerly Holy Name Seminary, will be transformed into a multi-family housing community. (Catholic Herald file photo)

while enhancing the economic capability of the property by seeking long-term coverage for total expenses.

This is accomplished by offering a unique housing community with numerous amenities, at a beloved and historic location on the west side of the city with a picturesque view of Madison. The Diocese of Madison will retain ownership of the property.

Commending Gorman & Company's refined plan, all their diligent work, and what it affords the diocese, Bishop Morlino said, "From the beginning, this project has been about establishing a firm footing for the future of our diocesan Church. We knew this would require sacrifices, and we were prepared to find a new temporary home for our offices.

"Through the continued work and creativity of excellent and expert lay leaders, we now have a way to maintain our offices in the redeveloped building and maintain a very visible link in continuity with our past. I am more grateful than ever for the assistance of Gary Gorman and his staff in working for a solution that has surpassed even our previous expectations."

'Win-win' plan

Both parties view the plan as a "win-win." Previously reported expected operating expense savings for the diocese are still anticipated under the refined plan. For Gorman & Company, the cost of the redevelopment, management, and lease of the space makes better sense, while better preserving the already established identity of the building.

Likewise, the residential redevelopment, especially with its proximity to All Saints Neighborhood, a Catholic Charities of Madison senior housing community, will provide a convenient range of options in the immediate area for future residents looking for a distinctive, attractive, and friendly living environment.

Monsignor Bartylla told diocesan staff about the proposed plan for the building. It is expected to include one-bedroom and two-bedroom apartments.

The chapel will be part of the diocesan space and would continue to be used for Mass and Eucharistic Adoration. The gym is expected to be used, as well as the grounds.

All diocesan offices and other related entities would remain, although there may be some "sacrifice" needed in the use of the office space. "We have to look at the most efficient use of our space," said Monsignor Bartylla.

The BOC will no longer have its conference identity, said Monsignor Bartylla. "That will no longer be available."

Construction of the apartments is expected to begin soon and take about a year.

"In God's divine providence, this is a blessing for staff, future residents, and the many who come to the BOC daily to pray," said a statement from the diocese.
