

Bishop says to buy the concrete, steel for new Catholic high school in Columbia

By Jane Rutter

“Full speed ahead,” said Bishop John R. Gaydos as he approved the purchase of the steel and concrete to build the Father Augustine Tolton Regional Catholic High School in Columbia.

The purchase will be the latest leap forward toward the school’s Fall 2011 opening date.

“Buying the steel and concrete before prices escalate with the recovering economy is good stewardship of the building donations entrusted to our care,” said Bishop Gaydos, who acted on the recommendation of the project’s Executive Committee.

The purchase will also keep the project on the strict construction timeline necessary to be ready for the students when they arrive.



Meanwhile, excavation is nearing completion on the floor for the school’s gymnasium.

Father Augustine Tolton Regional Catholic High School will offer a rigorous, faith-based, college-prep curriculum, including instruction in the Catholic faith. It will draw students from Columbia and surrounding communities.

To date, \$10.1 million in donations has been raised for the high school. Site package and structural bids for the project came in at 20 percent less than estimated, dropping the expected cost of the school to \$14.3 million.

It is anticipated that lower mechanical, electrical and plumbing bids, all of which are due at the end of July, will further decrease the project cost.

In the meantime, fund-raising continues. Over 100 volunteers are organizing to complete calls to all Catholic families in Columbia, while a committee headed by David Keller sets about contacting local businesses for their support.

“The high school will have a major economic impact on the Columbia area and part-nering with our businesses now makes sense,” said Mr. Keller, president of The Bank of Missouri.

Donald Novotney, superintendent of Catholic schools for the Jefferson City diocese, along with area high school principals, is hard at work refining the curriculum for the new school. At the same time, a committee is reviewing applications to hire the school’s first president.

The initial phase of the high school will be built to accommodate 200 to 250 students. It will include 11 classrooms — seven general, two science, and an art and music room. Additionally, the school will house science and computer labs and the library/media center. The state-of-the-art gymnasium is designed with two cross-courts, a weight room and lockers.

The school will open with ninth and 10th grade in year one, adding 11th grade in year two and 12th grade in year three.

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