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Archdiocese acquires land in Schertz for new Catholic high school

San Antonio Business Journal - by [Tricia Lynn Silva](#)

After almost a year-long search for just the right site, the Archdiocese of San Antonio has closed on the purchase of land for its newest high school — the John Paul II Catholic High School.

The facility will be located on a 53-acre tract of land along Friesenhahn Road and FM 482. The site is located in the city of Schertz — just northeast of San Antonio.

From the outset, the goal was to develop a high school that could serve the parishes in North San Antonio as well as parishes in communities just north of the city — including Seguin, New Braunfels, and the Schertz/Cibolo/Universal City area.

At present, there are a total of four Catholic elementary schools in the communities of New Braunfels, Seguin, Selma and Converse, says Craig Zgabay, president of the John Paul II school council.

What's lacking is a high school where the kids in these outlying cities can continue their Catholic education.

"The area is underserved," says Zgabay, adding that, at present, the only alternative would be a daily trek into San Antonio to one of the existing Catholic High Schools — most of which are located just north of downtown.

"Schertz, New Braunfels and Seguin all have wonderful Catholic elementary schools," adds Dr. Alex Urteaga, head of the building committee for John Paul II. "But parents were unable to send their children to a Catholic high school unless they were willing to drive more than an hour into San Antonio. "(The Friesenhahn Road tract) is easily accessible from the entire region."

Carl R. Olson Jr. of locally based **Olson Properties, Inc.** represented the Archdiocese in the recent land deal. The sales price was not disclosed.

Olson and his firm searched more than 100 potential sites for the John Paul II school. His firm not only analyzed tracts of land being marketed for sale, but sites that weren't on the market as well.

The land that the Archdiocese ultimately bought was one of the latter. It was owned by two families — both long-time residents of the area: The Morris and Hoffman families.

"The perfect site may not happen to be on the market," says Olson, who adds that finding off-the-market sites can be quite tricky.

While the Bexar County Appraisal District does a good job of documenting ownership of land in Bexar County, such information in more rural counties can be hard to come by, Olson adds.

Asked what prompted the families to sell their property even though it wasn't on the market, Olson says that both liked the idea of having the land used for the development of a Catholic school — something they saw as a very positive project for the city of Schertz.

Moving forward

Construction on John Paul II is slated to get under way around the first of 2009, Zgabay says.

Modular facilities for the school will be ready in time for the 2009-2010 academic year, Zgabay continues. Initially, the school will open with freshman and sophomore classes.

Plans call for adding a junior class for the 2010-2011 school year. A senior class will be added the following year.

The long-term plan for John Paul II calls for a school that can accommodate 500 students — roughly 125 students per grade level, Zgabay says.

At build-out, the high school will span between 100,000 to 125,000 square feet. Total development costs have been estimated at between \$20 to \$25 million.

It is a master plan that will be completed in phases.

“As our enrollment and fundraising programs increase, we will continue to add facilities,” Zgabay says.

The final product will feature classrooms, a fine arts center, science labs and other facilities for a “full-fledged, state-of-the-art high school,” he adds.

John Paul II High School

What: The newest Catholic High School within the Archdiocese of San Antonio

Where: Located off Friesenhahn Road and FM 482 in the city of Schertz

When: Will open with freshman and sophomore classes for the 2009-2010 academic year

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