

CRISTO REY INTERESTED IN HISTORIC SCHOOL BUILDING

Two different paths taken may have Cristo Rey Columbus High School and the Columbus Metropolitan Library arriving at the same historic destination and changing the course of students' lives forever.

Last week, the library announced it had negotiated a contract to purchase the former Ohio State School for the Deaf at 400 E. Town St. for \$2.1 million. The 2.24-acre property, situated between the Deaf School Park and the main library, includes the vacant four-story building completed in 1899 (pictured) which housed the school for the deaf until the school was moved to northern Columbus in 1953.

The building then was used for a variety of other purposes, most recently as an office building and to house the state welfare department. It has been vacant for about six years. It is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Cristo Rey Columbus High School is interested in using the former school building on that site for its permanent home. Last fall, both the main library and Cristo Rey discovered that each was interested in acquiring the property which includes the building.

"We were both pursuing it independently," said Jim Foley, president of Cristo Rey, a new Catholic college-preparatory school. "We need to find a permanent home for our school, and we are very interested in this particular building and its central, downtown location. This is the perfect location to allow us to serve students from all parts of the city."

The library has first rights to buy the property under an arrangement with the city of Columbus. Library officials envision that the property surrounding the former school building may be used as an outdoor plaza.

In a news release, Pat Losinski, the



library's chief executive officer, said, "Our interest in the parcel is inspired by Bryant Park in New York, which is connected to the New York Public Library and provides an outdoor reading room and green space for library customers."

If the library decides that it wants to develop the land surrounding the Deaf School building for its own use, but is not interested in the building itself, it could sell the building to Cristo Rey. The library board was to vote on the purchase of the site at its meeting on Wednesday, Jan. 30, after this week's *Catholic Times* went to press.

"We couldn't imagine a more perfect location for our students to attend school than in a historical school building adjacent to a nationally recognized library that, by the way, has been named the number-one library in the country several times," Foley said. "The juxtaposition of our two institutions would create an exciting synergy, advancing the important and complementary goals and missions of both entities."

"Our students could become immersed in the library experience and witness

firsthand the thousands of people from all walks of life who have incorporated the main library into a lifetime of learning," Foley continued. "Our staff, along with the library, would be instilling in our students the hunger for and habit of lifetime learning, and therefore helping prepare our students for college and a lifetime of success."

Foley said Cristo Rey will be ready to formally submit its proposed purchase and use of the school building to the library as soon as it is known how the library will undertake its decision-making process. He said Cristo Rey is continuing its due diligence on the possible purchase of the building.

Library spokesman Gregg Dodd agreed that the possible proximity of the school building and the library would be beneficial for everyone. "We've had some great conversations with the people from Cristo Rey," he said. "The potential for them to take ownership of the building is there, and we'd be very excited to work with them or whoever purchases the building. For Cristo Rey to move in would be a win-win."

Foley also said the Deaf School's lo-

cation near several institutions of higher learning and the offices of many companies provides another positive reason for Cristo Rey to try and locate there. "These are perfect companies, within walking distance, for us to engage with for our professional work-study program," he said.

That program is the signature component of Cristo Rey Columbus. It provides a national educational model in which businesses invest in student workers to make a Catholic, college-preparatory education possible for students who cannot afford it. Students work five full days a month in a professional office setting with the school's business partners. This allows them to pay for the majority of their education, gain job experience, grow in self-confidence, and realize the relevance of their education.

"Before the library indicated its intent to purchase the Deaf School property, our professional work-study program director, Carolyn Flahive, and I had already met with many of the companies in the Discovery District and surrounding area to discuss their participation in the work-study program," Foley said.

"Being located close to such great community-focused businesses as Motorists Insurance, Nationwide Children's Hospital, and Bricker and Eckler (all of whom are giving us jobs) and many other potential job sponsors would have a tremendous impact on our students' high school careers."

Cristo Rey Columbus High School, set to welcome its freshman class this August, is a high-performing, college-preparatory, co-educational Catholic high school for students from economically challenged families. When it opens in a temporary location at 840 W. State St., it will be the 26th high school in the national Cristo Rey network.

Don't Miss Out

Catholic Times is the only newspaper that brings you a weekly look at Catholic life in the Diocese of Columbus

The Catholic Times Collection 2013

By dropping your *Catholic Times* envelope into the collection plate any time in February, you guarantee getting the next 48 weekly issues of *Catholic Times* for the special parish rate of \$17. If you don't have the envelope, just attach a note to your contribution telling your parish you want the *Catholic Times*!