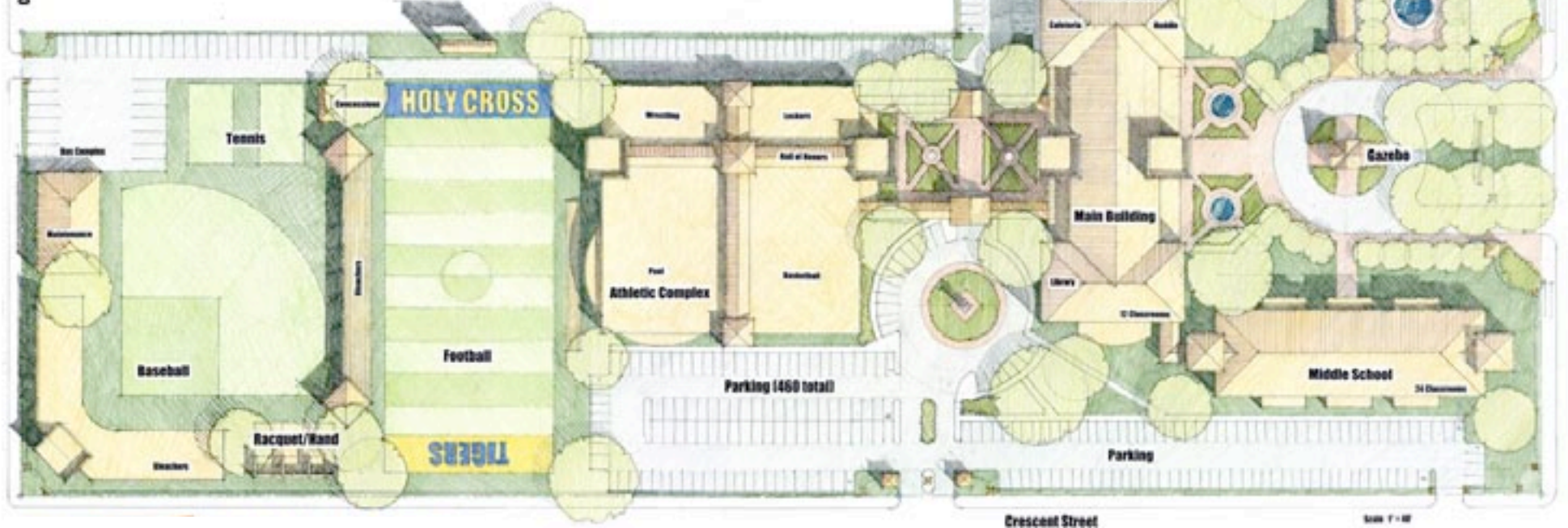




# Cabrini parishioners OK Holy Cross talks

HOLY CROSS Headmaster Charles DiGange answers questions at a town hall meeting of St. Frances Cabrini parishioners July 23 at St. Pius X Church.. Parishioners voted in favor of continuing talks on selling its Gentilly property so the 157-year-old school can relocate from the lower Ninth Ward. (Photo by Peter Finney Jr.; architectural drawings by Broadmoor Design Group and Blich Knevel Architects.)



By PETER FINNEY Jr.

Parishioners of St. Frances Cabrini Church voted overwhelmingly July 23 for a proposal that would allow Holy Cross School to purchase the land currently occupied by the flood-damaged church, rectory and school so that the 157-year-old school can relocate from the lower Ninth Ward to Gentilly.

Under the proposal, which is being negotiated by representatives of Holy Cross and the Archdiocese of New Orleans, Holy Cross also would purchase the adjacent land occupied by Redeemer-Seton High School, a total of about 18 acres.

The purchase price still needs to be worked out, and Holy Cross board president Bill Chauvin said

the school still was considering a slightly larger site in Kenner owned by the Jefferson Parish School Board. But Chauvin said Holy Cross' preference was to remain in Orleans Parish.

Although the proposal for Holy Cross to purchase the two parcels does not include plans to build a new parish church, any money that is derived from the sale could be used by St. Frances Cabrini to acquire property for a church if the parish is allowed to reopen at some point in the future.

However, parishioners acknowledged the uncertainty of their parish reopening. An archdiocesan committee is meeting to develop criteria for the 23 parishes that have yet to reopen since Katrina.

Those guidelines likely will look at the size of the Catholic population being served by open parishes.

"There is a real possibility that St. Frances Cabrini will not exist again as a parish," said Deacon Jerry Martinez, formerly assigned to the parish. "We have an opportunity to make a contribution to the archdiocese and to an area."

Under the plan, Holy Cross would demolish all buildings on both sites and invest \$25 million in new classrooms and athletic facilities.

Except for the exquisite marble altar and the statue of the Risen Christ above the altar, artifacts and sacred vessels inside St. Frances Cabrini Church have been secured for possible future use in a new church, said Edmundite Father

Michael Jacques, who has been appointed by Archbishop Alfred C. Hughes to serve as an advocate for the parish responsible for protecting its canonical and material interests.

Father Jacques said he would convene a meeting of parish leadership within the next two weeks to discuss ways to keep the faith community together.

Father William Maestri, superintendent of Catholic schools, said he hoped the negotiations could be completed by the end of July.

"We are gratified by the response of the parishioners during and after the meeting," Father Maestri said. "There was a great deal of positive comments directed toward Holy Cross."