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## DENVER BUSINESS JOURNAL

### EXCLUSIVE REPORTS

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#### Jesuits to buy campus in northwest Denver

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Denver Business Journal

A new Jesuit high school in Denver is now a certainty, say its founders, who plan to buy the Holy Family Catholic School campus in northwest Denver and locate the school there.

Arrupe Jesuit High School is under contract to buy the 45,000-square-foot campus for \$2.9 million.

Holy Family Catholic School — established 83 years ago — announced in January it would close its doors at the end of this academic year due to low enrollment.

The school, at 4343 Utica St., most recently served children between kindergarten and eighth grade, but included a high school until 1999 when it relocated to Broomfield.

Those working locally to establish Arrupe Jesuit High School previously had an entire city block in Denver's uptown neighborhood under contract for \$6 million.

That block, between 18th and 19th avenues and Logan and Pennsylvania streets, is owned by the Catholic Archdiocese of Denver and was once home to Central Catholic High School. It was listed for sale in 2001 for \$6.9 million.

Some school buildings are still on the site.

Arrupe Jesuit school officials though decided the Uptown site was too expensive, given the purchase price and added costs of rehabilitation and construction.

"It was ridiculous how much it would have cost to rehab the buildings and bring them up to code," said the Rev. Steve Planning, Arrupe Jesuit High School president. "The great thing about the new building is — as we understand it — it's up to code and has an elevator and ramping for wheelchairs."

The school is raising funds and seeking financing to cover the cost of the purchase, Planning said. The Holy Family school will not need any renovations or upgrades.

Arrupe Jesuit High School will be modeled after Chicago's Cristo Rey High School founded in 1996. That school serves lower-income students whom it places in business internships to help defray tuition costs.

Several schools have been founded on the Cristo Rey model in recent years, including one in Portland, Ore., one in Los Angeles and another in Austin, Texas, said Planning, who was vice principal of Cristo Rey in Chicago.

Specifically, Arrupe Jesuit will assign each student to a four-person work team and each will work one day a

week for a sponsoring Denver business and attend school for the remainder of the week.

The money earned by students working will cover as much as 70 percent of their tuition costs. An extended academic year will allow students to make up for time spent at work.

Wells Fargo, Kaiser Permanente, United Way and aerospace defense contractor IITC have committed to becoming corporate partners and providing jobs for Arrupe Jesuit students. Planning said approximately 15 other companies are close to signing contracts with the school.

The school has a strong board in place, and has received support from a variety of other businesses and individuals.

Don Fitzmartin, who handles design and construction consulting for commercial real estate firm Staubach, is donating project management services and reaching out to other businesses. His firm, which represents tenants seeking office space, has been supportive of his work with the high school.

Fitzmartin said he attended a Jesuit high school in Dallas and now he wants to give something back.

Interest in the school by prospective students also has been high, said Helen Salazar-Martin, director of development for the school.

"In December — when we didn't even know where the school would be — we had an open house and had 100 students and parents who were interested in the school. Interest has been very, very high and now that we have a site, we think it will increase," Salazar-Martin said.

Administrators of the coed high school plan to open this fall with a freshman class of about 100 students. Salazar-Martin said they've received about 60 applications to date and will be conducting some interviews this weekend.

The goal is to eventually have a student body of about 400, which the Holy Family School campus can accommodate in its current form.

Michael O'Hagan, who was hired in January as the new school's principal, said he's received more than 40 résumés from interested teachers, and plans to hire five or six for the coming school year by the end of April. Right now, a staff of five is handling the new school's launch.

"As a staff and a school, we're very excited about the opportunity to help kids," O'Hagan said. "There's no doubt about it that this school is a go. This [purchase] happens to make it work all the better."

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