Catholic Charities gets $5M gift toward $100M Dorothy Day Center

By Sam Black, Senior reporter
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Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis wants to build a new homeless shelter and supportive housing complex at 411 Main St. in St. Paul, where a three-story office building is today.

Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis have received a $5 million gift from The Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation to help fund the new Dorothy Day Center in downtown St. Paul.

Catholic Charities announced the gift from the Best Buy founder's organization as part of its new $40 million private fundraising effort for the $100 million building project.

Catholic Charities has raised $11 million from private sources for the new center, including $1 million from the Frey Foundation, $1 million from the Pohlad Foundation and $1.1 million from a trio of nonprofits: The St. Paul Foundation, F.R. Bigelow Foundation and Mardag Foundation.

The project consists of two phases (view a video about it below). Near the Xcel Energy Center,
the site is now home to the three-story Labor & Professional Centre office building.

The "Higher Ground St. Paul" first phase includes an emergency shelter and a range of different permanent housing options at 411 Main St., next to the current Dorothy Day Center. Catholic Charities plans to break ground this summer on the building, which will be open in 2016. It will be modeled around Catholic Charities' Higher Ground shelter in Minneapolis.

Phase 2 of the project is called Connection Center Housing. It will be in a mixed-use building that will have four floors of permanent housing above office space leased to Ramsey County, health care providers, the Veterans Administration and Catholic Charities. That phase is expected to be done by 2018.

The private fundraising campaign is being chaired by Doug Baker, chairman and CEO of St. Paul-based Ecolab Inc.; Mary Brainerd, CEO and president of Bloomington-based HealthPartners; and Andy Cecere, vice chairman and chief operating officer of Minneapolis-based U.S. Bancorp.

“The Dorothy Day Center is a community emergency center that is falling apart, unable to meet the needs of the people who use its services and support,” Mary Brainerd said in a news release. “As in health care, we need better emergency centers and sustainable community solutions that truly meet the needs of people in our community.”

St. Paul-based Cermak Rhoades Architects designed the buildings. St. Louis Park-based Watson-Forsberg Construction is expected to be the general contractor.

The project has already received another $28 million in support from public sources such as the state of Minnesota, Ramsey County and the city of St. Paul.

The Minnesota Legislature is considering $12 million more through a bill supported by Sen. Sandy Pappas (DFL-St. Paul) and Rep. Rod Hamilton (R-Mountain Lake).