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August 21, 20

New entrance for Bethel

Residence hall, student center also in plans for future

By MARGARET FOSMOE
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MISHAWAKA — Some of the stately old oak trees on Bethel College's west lawn recently were cut down, making way for construction of a grand new entrance along Logan Street.

"It will create a new look for the college, a more inviting look," said Steven R. Cramer, Bethel's president.

The redesigned entrance will feature brick signs with the college name, a paving stone drive and a wrought-iron fence. A traffic roundabout will encircle a fountain with the college's landmark "The Helm" statue as its focal point.

The Helm depicts a ship's wheel to symbolize the college's motto: "With Christ at the Helm." Years ago, The Helm was centered in a fountain that later was removed, so the new design will restore that campus landmark, Cramer said.

The college will ask the city of Mishawaka for permission to switch its formal address from McKinley Avenue to Logan Street.

The \$600,000 entrance project is being paid for by an anonymous donor.



An architect's rendering of the planned new entrance to Bethel College, facing Logan Street.

Illustration provided/The Troyer Group

The entrance should be done by Oct. 27-28, homecoming weekend for the evangelical Christian college. Bethel is marking its 60th year.

Homecoming also will include a dedication of the expanded Middleton Hall of Science. Workers are finishing the \$6.5 million project, which includes three state-of-the-art science laboratories. The science building is expected to be ready by Aug. 30, the first day of fall classes.

Bethel is planning \$30 million to \$40 million in building projects and improvements in the next decade, including:

- A new all-suites residence hall to house 90 to 100 students.
- A possible second new residence hall.
- A 70,000-square-foot student center, expected to cost \$12 million to \$15 million.
- The college has bought Jefferson Mobile Home Park south of campus for future expansion, and will exercise an option in spring 2008 to complete the purchase of another nearby mobile home park, Princess City Mobile Court.

Those two purchases will expand the current 75-acre campus by 12.4 acres. The college has no immediate plans to expand onto the mobile home park land, but when tenants leave, they are not being replaced, Cramer said.

- Possible renovation or replacement of Huffman Administration Building.
- Upgrades to campus athletic facilities.

The new \$3.5 million to \$4 million residence hall is planned for the northwest corner of campus. Construction may start late this fall, with completion planned for August 2008.

"We have the need. The last several years, we've been turning away people for campus housing and placing them in rented houses," Cramer said. The college owns about 24 houses near campus that it rents to students or employees.

Bethel enrolled 2,085 students in 2006-07, with about 850 undergraduates living on campus.

The student center will be the central focus of Bethel's next major capital campaign. "If all goes well, construction could begin in three or four years," Cramer said.

Bethel's last capital campaign raised the college's endowment to about \$8 million, up from \$2 million in 1990.

In addition to the main campus in Mishawaka, Bethel operates a program site in Elkhart and offers courses at Southwestern Michigan College in Dowagiac and master of ministry courses at several sites. Off-site teaching may expand further.

"We will continue to look for opportunities and partnerships that will allow us to serve in this region," Cramer said. "The renaissance of the college continues. We see great days ahead."

Staff writer Margaret Fosmoe: