

JCU master plan places emphasis on modern housing

Additional parking, sports fields also top university's priorities

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John Carroll University has three immediate needs: more on-campus student housing, more parking and more sports fields.

The Jesuit school will stress those priorities in the coming weeks when it presents the tentative master plan for its campus to local residents and University Heights officials, said the Rev. Robert Niehoff, president of John Carroll. Details of the plans could change as the university meets with residents and the city, but the priorities will remain, he said.

"We'd like to house more students on campus and get them out of the neighborhoods," Rev. Niehoff said.

Student housing — and the university's overall growth plan — have been a concern for University Heights residents for the last 15 years as John Carroll bought homes surrounding its landlocked campus for possible future expansion.

The new development plan addresses how some of that land will be used over the next 20 years as the school tries to become more attractive to prospective students, Rev. Niehoff said. John Carroll's enrollment peaked at 4,478 in the fall semester of the 1998-1999 school year, but it steadily has declined to an estimated 3,766 in the current school year.

The problem, Rev. Niehoff said, is that students want modern dorms with private bathrooms and plenty of parking — amenities that are offered



FILE PHOTO/MARC GOLUB

The Rev. Robert Niehoff, president of John Carroll University.

at other colleges statewide and across the country.

"All of our residence halls are the traditional bathroom down the hall," he said. "We need to build more upper-class housing (and) apartment-style housing."

Changing the buzz

John Carroll is considering building 400 apartment-style dorms in front of its Dolan Center for Science and Technology or razing old dorms to make way for new residence halls, Rev. Niehoff said. The cost of those potential projects hasn't been determined, but he'd like to begin planning housing within the next two years.

The new dorms would help get more juniors and seniors back on campus and out of nearby apartments and rental homes, where their presence has produced complaints from other residents in the past, he said. John Carroll owns some apartment

buildings on Warrensville Center Road at Fairmount Circle, but Rev. Niehoff said Shaker Heights residents don't want more students living in those buildings.

Under the master plan, John Carroll would have a much larger presence along Warrensville Center Road with the addition of two sports fields and an underground parking garage, said Doreen Riley, vice president for university advancement at John Carroll. Another parking garage is proposed under the existing baseball field, said Nicholas Santilli, John Carroll's associate academic vice president for planning and assessment.

The garages are estimated to cost \$18 million to \$20 million each and would add a total of 1,000 parking spaces to campus, Ms. Riley said. The sports fields are needed because John Carroll currently leases fields at Bellefaire JCB in Shaker Heights and the university wants to add lacrosse and field hockey for men and women as soon as possible because those sports appeal to the wealthier students John Carroll wants to attract, she said.

With the cost of college growing each year and the economy struggling, Rev. Niehoff said fewer John Carroll students can afford the \$27,190 tuition (for the 2008-2009 school year) and need more financial aid from the university, which reduces the amount of net tuition the school collects. John Carroll typically provides about \$32 million a year in student aid, but he expects that figure to increase by \$1 million to \$1.5 million next fall.

"We need to change the buzz about John Carroll," he said. "We need the students to begin to choose us who can pay us more."

CORRECTION

An April 21, page 14 story on John Carroll University's construction plan contained incorrect information. John Carroll will build one sports field along Warrensville Center Road and is considering building two apartment-style residence halls with a total of 500 to 600 beds. The university will renovate existing residence halls instead of tearing them down.