

# Planners hope to turn neighborhood around

**EDITORS' NOTE:** This is the second in an occasional series, *Sharing the Banquet*, focusing on efforts by Christians to end poverty here in the United States and abroad by promoting economic development. This story is Part I of two articles exploring the St. Mary's Hospital/Bull's Head Plan.

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

**ROCHESTER** — In August, 1992, a report prepared by Lane, Frenchman and Associates, Inc., in association with Hammer, Siler, George, Inc., made several distressing conclusions about the city's Bull's Head district, which is home to St. Mary's Hospital, 89 Genesee St.



Deteriorating residential conditions to the north and northeast of the Bull's Head block had created a poor image for the area, the report said.

Bull's Head was considered unsafe and plagued by vacant buildings, marginal businesses, properties in poor condition, and a lack of visible parking.

The report added that the West Main Street area across from the hospital was "a locus for hanging out and loitering," a home of public alcohol and drug abuse.

In addition to these conditions, the hospital reported in December, 1993, that one quarter of neighborhood families lives in poverty, and that unemployment, teen pregnancy and infant mortality are all about double the overall city percentages.

For the past six years, Patrick J. Madden, St. Mary's president, has worked on a plan with the city, Monroe County, Monroe Community College, and area citizens and agencies to radically change the area's economic and social climate.

"The whole goal of this is to improve the standard of living in the area," Madden said of the Bull's Head project, which he said would create at least 1,500 jobs.



The proposed site for Bull's Head development (pictured here) is located on West Main Street, across from St. Mary's Hospital. The plan would bring a \$20 million health campus to this location.

S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

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On several occasions, Madden has stated that the often woeful health of St. Mary's low-income patients is directly related to the neighborhood's poor health. Improving that health has been the prime motivation for St. Mary's to play the economic development game, he explained.

"All of this is really our way of moving from a clinical model of care to a social and economic model," he said.

Extensive studies combined with public meetings over the last few years have created expectations of a vastly different future for the area recognized as one of the city's poorest. The Bull's Head development plan calls for the creation of a \$20 million health campus on West Main Street, across from the hospital. The plot of land on which the campus would sit is currently divided up between several business and residential property-owners.

When established, the campus would

be home to the following:

- St. Mary's administrative and archival office space.
- St. Mary's oral health clinic.
- A museum devoted to the life of abolitionist Frederick Douglass.
- A branch of Monroe Community College devoted to health-care career training which will be linked to St. Mary's facilities and to MCC's current downtown branch.
- A city police section station.
- A two-tiered parking structure.
- Retail establishments.
- A pedestrian skyway or an underground tunnel linking the campus to St. Mary's.

Some aspects of the plan are still being discussed, most notably the creation of the MCC branch, according to Sandra Stevens, president of the Bull's Head Community Development Corporation. But the basic thrust of the plan has been ironed out, and three developers have been selected by the corporation for the project. The project must still receive approval from the City Council, she not-

ed, but if all goes as scheduled the campus should be in place by 1997.

The St. Mary's/Bull's Head project is one of a number of factors in the city's plan to create an EZEC — or Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community, according to Jeffrey Carlson, chief of staff for the city's Mayor Bill Johnson.

"We see it as a key job-generator," Carlson said.

Carlson, who also sits on the board of the Bull's Head Community Development Corporation, noted that the city this June will apply to the federal government for designation as an EZEC. If selected, the city would not only receive \$3 million but also special consideration for other federal programs. The city's EZEC would cover much of the west side. Residents may attend a 7:30 p.m. meeting on the application this Monday, May 2, at Eastman Kodak's Hawkeye Plant, 20 Avenue E.

The St. Mary's/Bull's Head plan has attracted great interest from the neighborhood, noted Melissa Marquez, who

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# Priest deplures embargo, says it only hurts Haiti's poor

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

**PITTSFORD** — A U.N.-imposed embargo against Haiti only hurts its average citizens and does nothing to hasten the day when democracy will return, according to Passionist Father Richard Frechette.

Director of the Passionists' missionary activity in Haiti, Father Frechette works at Our Little Brothers and Sisters Orphanage and Hospice outside of the capital city of Port-au-Prince. The Passionists also operate orphanages in Latin America.

The priest spoke with the *Catholic Courier* on Saturday morning, April 23, from the home of Robert McNamara, who directs New York Friends of the Orphans, which partially funds Father Frechette's work.

The priest visited Pittsford to attend an afternoon reception at St. Louis Parish, 60 S. Main St. to thank the parish's World Hunger Task Force and the Pittsford-Perinton Kiwanis Club for supporting the orphanage and hospice.

Father Frechette severely criticized the economic embargo imposed after Haiti's first democratically elected president, Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was ousted in a 1991 military coup.

"It's destroying the micro-economy that's holding the nation together," Father Frechette said.

Many Haitians rely on small-scale enterprises to make a living, and the embargo has inflated prices throughout the mostly impoverished nation, the priest noted. As the price of fuel has skyrocketed, so too have bus fares, he said, discouraging Haitians from traveling to sell their goods or to work. Many Haitians have sold off what little goods they have — a few pigs, for instance — in order to survive.

Meanwhile, he said, Haiti's military profits from a black market in goods imported from the Dominican Republic, which borders Haiti. And Father Aristide's return is nowhere in sight.

Father Frechette said he would support the embargo if there was a serious attempt by the United States to remove the "butchers" who illegally run the country.

"I believe there is no serious attempt," Father Frechette added, pointing out that Father Aristide has too many enemies among Haiti's wealthy business monopolists and military men. The Vatican and the U.S. military and intelligence establishments can also be counted among the exiled president's critics, he said.

"He seems to have no support except with the peasants," Father Frechette said.

Father Frechette would support Father Aristide's return because he was elected, but he doubted that the priest-president could run the country effectively.

"I would say that he has demonstrat-

ed no political skills," he remarked. "He has demonstrated no spirit of compromise or reconciliation. He's excellent at denouncing and causing antipathies ... He's certainly a most competent prophet. But as a diplomat and a politician, it's difficult to see him being effective."

Despite his skepticism concerning Father Aristide, Father Frechette remarked that the deposed president's brief rule of the island country raised morale among most of its weary population. Few people fled the country under Aristide, as they are doing now, he explained.

As politicians and military men squabble over Haiti's future, life for the average Haitian peasant seems a daily exercise in increasing misery. He noted, for example, that many Haitians have absolutely no access to clean drinking water and must bathe in and drink of water with waste in it.

"They have no choice if they're going to have a drink of water," he said.

Working in the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation for the last seven years, the 41-year-old priest said 306 children currently live at Our Little Brothers and Sisters Orphanage. Most of the orphans are the offspring of single mothers who have died, he said.

Once accepted at the orphanage, the children, who range in age from a few days old to 18, enjoy bed, board, schooling and recreation, he added. They currently sleep 80 children to a barracks,

but the orphanage plans to open two small cottages that will each house 20 more children, he said.

Father Frechette said that the Passionists also operate an outpatient clinic that sees about 30 children a day — many for diseases caused by malnutrition and unclean water. Most of the conditions the clinic staff sees are treatable, but about 20 percent of the children die in the hospice because their parents wait too long before seeking help, he added.

The staff attempt to educate parents on good health care through public meetings and one-on-one consultations, he said.

Father Frechette spoke about his work at weekend Masses at St. Louis. McNamara said the priest made an impression on the parish. In addition to \$500 given to him by the parish's hunger task force, an additional \$500 in unsolicited donations were given to the priest over the weekend, McNamara remarked.

"It was unbelievable the amount of love and contributions coming to him," McNamara said. "I've never seen anything like it in my life."

**EDITORS' NOTE:** Readers interested in assisting Father Frechette's work may send a check to: Friends of the Orphans, 66 Stuyvesant Road, Pittsford, N.Y. 14534. Readers can also sponsor a child in Haiti for \$20 a month. Call Robert McNamara, 716/381-5952, for information.

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