



BC to begin construction on Catholic Religious Archives

New facility will be resource for scholars, researchers,
and students on the societal effects of the Catholic
Church

The Boston Planning and Development Agency has approved the University's plan to construct a Catholic Religious Archives (CRA) facility that will connect to the Theology and Ministry Library on the Brighton Campus. Preliminary site work on the two-story, 44,000 square-foot building began in early January, with an anticipated construction completion date of June 2026.

The CRA will store archival records of Catholic congregations and religious orders of men and women that have ceased or are planning to cease operations, providing an invaluable resource for religious scholars, researchers, and students on the societal effects of the Catholic Church, particularly in the areas of education, health care, and social services. Consisting of 100,000 linear feet of storage space, the CRA will also house limited artwork from religious sources in both the United States and Canada.

"The Catholic Religious Archives will host material that is integral to American history and the history of the Catholic Church in North America," said University Librarian Tom Wall. "We are looking to honor the contributions of these religious orders and to preserve their legacies through professional archival operations and a state-of-the-art facility. Our archives and special collections have greatly benefitted teaching, research, and learning at Boston College. We know that the CRA will offer similar benefits for scholars and students at BC and beyond."

The CRA will be directed by Thomas P. Lester, an experienced archivist who previously served as director of the Archdiocese of Boston Archive and Library. He will work closely with Michael Burns, the founding director of the Catholic Religious Archives and a special assistant to the University Librarian, who has played a key role in the project's evolution.

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The University launched a Catholic Religious Archives Repository in 2019, following a 2018 conference hosted at Boston College titled “Envisioning the Future of Catholic Religious Archives,” which brought together 160 archivists, historians, and leaders of religious communities to consider ways of ensuring that archival holdings of various religious orders and congregations would be maintained and available to future generations.

The new facility, privately funded by donors, will be built on the north side of the Theology and Ministry Library. It will include an internal receiving area and a holding room for collected materials and will utilize the library’s research reading room and available space for processing collections. The buildings will be linked by a one-story connector.

The project was approved by the City of Boston as an amendment to the University’s existing Institutional Master Plan through a small project review application. Designed by the architecture firm Shepley Bulfinch, the CRA will be built by Suffolk Construction.

Associate Vice President for Capital Projects Mary Nardone said that the construction impacts on the Brighton Campus will include trucking and material deliveries, which will occur throughout the duration of the project. Trucks will enter and exit from the Commonwealth Avenue entrance and travel down the main spine road as well as the roads surrounding the library parking lot. The initial site activities will include fencing and necessary tree removals. As the site is prepared for building foundations, some hoe ramming will take place from January through March.

“The CRA itself will be constructed on an isolated knoll on the Brighton Campus that is outside of the mainstream of campus activity, though there will be limited impacts of construction noise and trucking to and from the site,” said Nardone. “It is being built by Suffolk Construction, which has a very good track record on

campus. We have met and will continue to meet with the abutters on the Brighton Campus to keep them informed throughout the project. Both Capital Projects and Government Affairs are available to community members if there are questions.”



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