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TEXARKANA, Ark. -- A local Catholic church is preparing to build a new outreach center that will nearly double the size of its current facility.

St. Edward Catholic Charities Outreach Center, 416 Ash St., operates out of an over 100-year-old building.

The new facility will be at 315 Beech St. and will serve as the primary outreach center and is expected to provide various resources to better support the community. The project has been in talks for years.

St. Edward Outreach Center started a pledge drive to raise \$950,000 for the project. The fund is at \$803,393.

"We decided to do a three-year pledge drive for this project," the Rev. William Burmester said.

St. Edward Outreach Center were able to begin the drive with a \$100,000 matching grant thanks to an anonymous donor.

"They wanted this grant to help raise funds, so they said they would donate \$100,000 if we can get \$100,000 in the first year," Burmester said.

The new building will be in the historic district of Texarkana. Altech Inc., is the general contractor.

"Our vision for the outreach center is to provide nourishment, dignity and love to those who are struggling in our community," Burmester said. "Through this provision of hot meals, caring conversations and a welcoming space, we are striving to meet the physical and emotional needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ."

St. Edward Outreach Center director Leon Pesek and Burmester aim to break ground on the center in the summer, with an expected completion of early 2026.

For over 40 years, the outreach center has provided meals to the homeless community and those facing food insecurity. It is operated entirely by volunteers, and the soup kitchen is fully funded through donations.

In 2024, the center served more than 200 meals a day, totaling 52,000 meals for the year, according to Burmester and Pesek.

The new outreach facility will offer expanded services, including a larger food pantry, clothing distribution closet, commercial kitchen and covered outdoor dining area.

The current outreach center is 1,200 square. The new facility will be approximately 2,400 square feet.

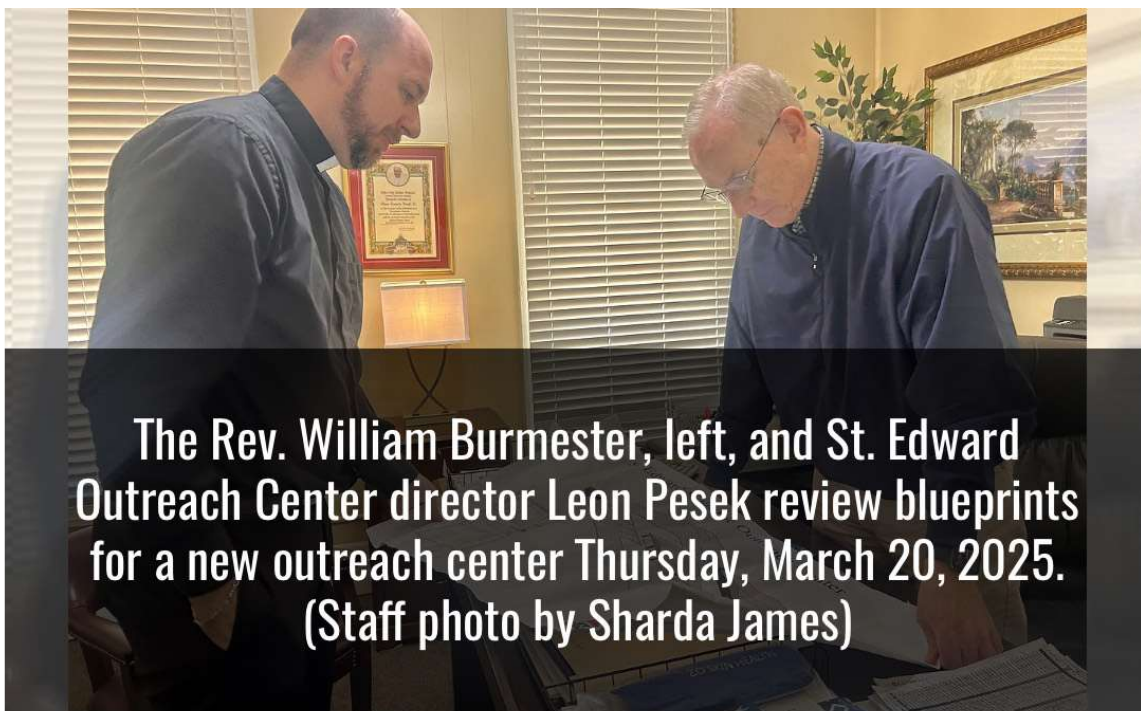
"We're going to extend the building by creating a door so that the youth can have the whole house," Burmester said. "So even the back room might be turned into like a rec room or something for them to hang out in."

Pesek and Burmester are most excited about the opportunity to grow St. Edward's outreach in the new facility.

"This will allow us to continue the long-term ministry, and second, it gives us more space to be more effective to the people who come through, and gives us more options as far as food serves we can provide," Pesek said.

By Sharda James, Texarkana Gazette





The Rev. William Burmester, left, and St. Edward Outreach Center director Leon Pesek review blueprints for a new outreach center Thursday, March 20, 2025. (Staff photo by Sharda James)