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“The whole purpose of this is to bring students back on campus. This is really intended to deepen the community here and really transform the whole undergraduate experience.”

MICHAEL FITTS, Tulane University president



STAFF PHOTO BY DAVID GRUNFELD

Two new dorms on the Tulane University campus, center, are located at the former site of Bruff Commons, between demolished Phelps House, to the left, and Irby Hall, to the right.

New dorms at Tulane part of \$185M project

Effort aimed at bringing more students on campus

BY LEAH CLARK Staff writer

Tulane University is set to open two new residence halls this fall, part of a \$185 million, multiyear student housing project that once completed will house hundreds more undergraduates on campus and attempt to relieve some of the stress placed on nearby neighborhoods.

The new dorms, called Lake and River, are located at the former site of Bruff Commons in the heart of the university’s Uptown campus. Together, they will add 697 new on-campus beds for undergraduate students in single and two-person suites.

Last week, contractors were handling the finishing touches on the buildings that include a raised courtyard, student lounges, a space for event programming and a place to hold viewing parties. A 200-seat theater will double as a leisure space and lecture hall. On the ground floor between the dorms, students have access to a 14,000-square-foot collaboration space called The Hub.

The completion of the dorms is the



STAFF PHOTO BY SOPHIA GERMER

Plastic remains on the television in the pit, a place students can watch games together in one of the new dorms at Tulane University.

first phase of a multipart construction project known as The Village, which began in 2020. According to Tulane officials, the project is aimed at the shortage of on-campus housing that neighbors say pushes stu-

dents to live off campus, disrupting the character of their neighborhoods.

“The whole purpose of this is to

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Andres

Kirkpatrick

Woodfork

Finalists for chief selected

NOPD interim head Woodfork still in the running

BY BEN MYERS and JOHN SIMERMAN Staff writers

Mayor LaToya Cantrell’s administration has narrowed the list of finalists to become the next New Orleans Police Department superintendent to three, the administration announced on Monday evening. They include interim Superintendent Michelle Woodfork, though one of two assessment panels that interviewed semifinalists said Woodfork doesn’t have adequate experience for the job.

The three finalists are:

Thedrick Andres, a former New Orleans police officer who retired in January as police chief of Henderson, Nevada, after serving for less than four years in that post. Andres left Henderson under fire, the subject of a “no confidence” vote of the rank and file. Andres left the New Orleans Police Department as a sergeant in 2005 for the police department in Arlington, Texas, then moved to Nevada to become a deputy chief. In 2014, Andres fatally shot and killed a man in a restaurant parking lot in Texas while partying off-duty, say-

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Jefferson faces big shortage of teachers

BY BLAKE PATERSON Staff writer

As they prepare to welcome students back to the classroom on Monday, Jefferson Parish’s public schools face an extraordinary shortage of teachers.

As of Friday, the public schools had 211 teacher vacancies, the highest number of openings at the start of a school year in at least five years, according to a presentation Monday before a School Board committee.

School districts nationwide and across Louisiana are struggling to hire teachers, as burnout from the pandemic, paired with dissatisfaction over pay, has pushed many longtime educators

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Cassidy backs Landry in governor’s race

BY TYLER BRIDGES Staff writer

U.S. Sen. Bill Cassidy’s decision to endorse Jeff Landry in the governor’s race Monday has more to do with Cassidy’s need to repair his standing among Republicans than any affinity with the attorney general, party leaders and political analysts said.

The move comes at a time when Cassidy remains on the outs with a significant segment of conservative voters in Louisiana since break-

ing with former President Donald Trump two years ago.

A number of party activists have vowed that they would not support the senator if he sought reelection in 2026.

With Monday’s announcement, Cassidy is now supporting the candidate for governor who has been endorsed by Trump and the Louisiana Republican Party, who has the most support among the five Republican candidates for governor and who has the lead in polls.

Landry was glued to Trump’s side

last Tuesday when the former president dropped by Café du Monde in the French Quarter and then raised money for his election campaign in Metairie.

“I think Bill being crosswise with Trump really disappointed or upset a lot of very conservative Louisianans. This is his opportunity to get back into their good graces,” said Richard Lipsey, a major Republican donor who is the founder of Lipsey’s, a

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Louisiana Attorney General Jeff Landry, left, shakes hands with Sen. Bill Cassidy at an event in 2018.

STAFF FILE PHOTO BY TRAVIS SPRADLING



DORMS

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bring students back on campus,” said Tulane University President Michael Pitts during a tour of the new residence halls Thursday. “This is really intended to deepen the community here and really transform the whole undergraduate experience.”

As part of the project, Tulane is currently demolishing three older dorms, Irby, Phelps and Paterson, that will be replaced by two new residence halls scheduled for completion in 2025.

That means that only 153 new beds will be available when students begin moving in Aug. 13 for the fall semester.

For some neighbors critical of the school, that is a long time to wait. Keith Hardie, who serves as vice president of Maple Area Residents Inc., a resident advocacy group, said Tulane hasn’t kept up with student housing needs for years, putting strains on his neighborhood as students sought housing there.

“I’m glad that they’re finally doing something, but they’re playing catch up,” Hardie said.

According to Tulane Chief Operating Officer Patrick Norton, prior to the completion of the new dorms, the university had 4,074 residential beds on campus for 8,785 undergraduates. Construction is expected to begin soon on Fogelman Hall, which will replace Irby.

Like many universities set in residential areas, Tulane has long faced complaints from people living in nearby neighborhoods about noise and other problems. Recently, the most contentious issue has been student housing.

Developers in the area have moved to convert homes, often shotgun doubles, into multibedroom units for students. Residents have complained that the conversions drive up housing costs, create parking problems and force longtime homeowners out of historic neighborhoods. The so-called “doubles to dorms” conversions prompted action from the City Council, which has tried to slow the spread of the controversial practice.

By bringing more beds to on-campus student housing, Norton said he believes



STAFF PHOTO BY SOPHIA GERMER

Boxes are unpacked Thursday outside the new dorms on the Tulane University campus.



STAFF PHOTO BY DAVID GRUNFELD

Irby Hall is one of three older dorms on the Tulane University campus that are being demolished, to be replaced by new residence halls.

it will relieve pressure on neighbors.

“We definitely value the importance of the uniqueness of our neighborhoods,” Norton said. “So that’s part of the beauty of this project, that by constructing these new residence halls, we may be able to bring back those students who are in the neighborhoods, especially the juniors.”

The university is also currently conducting a comprehensive study of its on-campus parking.

Upon The Village’s com-

pletion in 2025, 944 new beds will be added to on-campus housing.

According to Norton, there is an opportunity to add more beds after the project’s second phase, by building a fifth dorm. The additional 300-bed residence hall, which has not been approved yet, would bring the total new bed count to almost 1,250.

Tulane isn’t the only New Orleans university trying to bring more students onto campus.

Loyola University is ex-



STAFF PHOTO BY SOPHIA GERMER

Seating areas are throughout the new dorm building called Lake Hall at Tulane University.

pected to begin construction on a new residence hall this fall, at the site of its Mercy Hall. By fall 2025, the new hall will raise the number of beds on campus to approximately 2,000. Currently, Loyola’s maximum occupancy is 1,371 beds.

The new residence hall has been part of Loyola’s campus strategic plan since 2019, according to Rachel Hoormann, Loyola University Vice President of Marketing and Communications. “Students prefer to stay on campus, and this new

residence hall is recognizing the student need for housing,” Hoormann said. “We have some old halls that need significant renovations and having an additional hall will give us space.”

Xavier University of Louisiana expects to begin construction on a new residence hall this fall. According to Xavier University Vice President of Student Affairs Curtis Wright, the 685-bed dorm will house students previously living off-campus in apartments at the University of New Orleans. The new hall will replace St. Michael residence hall, increasing the total bed count on campus by approximately 300.

In 2022, Dillard University secured a loan to build a 200-bed residence hall at the site of its former apartment complex. Construction is set to begin in 2025, according to Dillard officials.

FINALISTS

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ing he acted in self-defense. He was cleared of wrongdoing. Andres holds a master’s degree in criminal justice from Southern University at New Orleans.

Anne Kirkpatrick served a three-year stint as police chief in Oakland, California. She was the first woman hired as chief in Oakland, coming in after a series of short-tenured chiefs. Kirkpatrick clashed with a police civilian oversight board that voted to fire her in February 2020. A jury later found she was wrongly terminated, and the city agreed to pay her \$1.5 million. Kirkpatrick previously worked as a police bureau chief in Chicago and as an undersheriff in King County, Washington. She was police chief in Spokane, Washington, for six years up to 2012.

Michelle Woodfork, the interim New Orleans chief, was named to that post in December after Shaun Ferguson’s retirement. A 31-year NOPD veteran, she was promoted to captain in 2021. Woodfork comes from a pedigree in law enforcement; she is the niece of the city’s first Black chief, Warren Woodfork. As a captain, she supervised recruiting during a time of lagging new police hires. She was earlier assigned for a decade to the department’s beleaguered sex crimes unit. Woodfork, 52, was injured in 2017 while working the Krewe of Endymion parade route when a drunk driver plowed into a crowd.

Andres scored the highest of the three finalists. Kirkpatrick was second, slightly ahead of Woodfork.

The list was delivered to the City Council on Monday night, produced by the International Association of Chiefs of Police, which the city hired in March to conduct a national search to replace Ferguson. It was culled from a half-dozen semifinalists, which had been identified from an applicant pool of 33. Two of the semifinalists dropped out, and the three finalists scored the highest in a series of interviews this month.

The interviews were conducted by two panels, an “internal” one composed of administration officials and an “external” one of business, civic and other political leaders. The external panel submitted a handwritten note that the majority of its members believed “Woodfork has demonstrated great potential but does not have adequate experience and would benefit from mentoring.”

Each candidate was interviewed, conducted a presentation and submitted a written exercise. They were scored on their strength of communication, judgment, decisiveness and other characteristics.

Council member Oliver Thomas, who was on the external panel and will have a vote in the council’s confirmation of whomever Cantrell chooses, said on Monday that he thinks Woodfork “should be given the chance to go through the process and distinguish herself.” He did not respond to a text Monday evening as to whether he agreed with the panel’s majority view that Woodfork lacks adequate experience.

The selection of chief is lagging well beyond initial expectations, based on a timetable in the IACP contract indicating a selection

would be made by the end of June. It is still unclear when Cantrell will announce a pick, who will then need City Council confirmation.

Cantrell will interview the finalists “in the coming weeks,” according to an administration press release, and the search will be concluded “in the coming months.”

The profiles that the organization recently provided to the city on the semi-finalists featured career highlights but no details on disciplinary issues or other troubles, which media reports have highlighted for several of them.

Several council members have chafed at the secrecy of the process, clamoring for more information on the finalists and the method for elevating them. Council members JP Morrell, Helena Moreno and Joe Giarrusso have said they are unimpressed with the semifinalists and criticized what they’ve said is a lack of transparency.

Woodfork has managed to avoid the withering criticism from council members and others that Ferguson faced in her seven months on the job, which has seen the murder rate — while still historically high — ease off last year’s post-Hurricane Katrina high.

The department is still crippled by continuously dwindling manpower, with just 891 commissioned officers as of July 23, according to a City Council dashboard. That is one less officer than the department had in 1947, and if the rate of decline continues, the force will shrink to its smallest on record by next summer. The council dashboard dates to 1930; the lowest officer count was 814 in 1939.

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