

## St. Laurence Church



photo credit: Vivien Jackson

### Overview:

The stunning Romanesque revival St. Laurence church, along with its classical rectory, convent, and school, were shuttered by the Archdiocese of Chicago in 2004. The religious complex is beautifully detailed and the interior of the church itself is reported to be remarkably intact, including beautiful mural work and other paintings. Until the site was shuttered by the Archdiocese, the school, church, and rectory were a vital community center in Grand Crossing and a significant architectural and cultural landmark to the neighborhood.

### History:

The church and rectory were designed by Joseph Molitor, a prominent Chicago architect known for his churches, including Sts. Cyril and Methodius, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Joseph Roman Catholic Church, St. Bonaventure and Holy Cross Roman Catholic Church. Five of the architect's churches are coded orange in the Chicago Historic Resources Survey. St. Laurence is one of the finest examples of Molitor's work, and one of the most intact. With the numerous church closings by the Archdiocese over the last decade, works by Molitor and other prominent architects are in danger of disappearing.

**St. Laurence Church**  
7148 S. Dorchester Avenue  
**Architect:** Joseph Molitor  
**Date:** 1911

## St. Laurence Church cont.

### Threat

In 2005 the complex was purchased by Eden Independent Living, which hoped to carry out a plan, approved by the city's Plan Commission, to build a supportive living facility on the site, which would involve large-scale demolition of the site. While awaiting a new development plan, the rectory was damaged in a fire, underlining the fragility of this abandoned site.

### Recommendations:

Preservation Chicago urges the adaptive reuse of St. Laurence Church rather than wholesale demolition. Numerous reuse possibilities can be achieved within the existing walls of the church and its support buildings. If a senior living center is indeed desired, every effort should be made to reuse the existing structures for that purpose.

### Take Action:

Contact 5th Ward Alderman Leslie Hairston and tell her you want to see St. Laurence Church preserved and adaptively reused.

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