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Music, art, wedding, cooking, dance: Epiphany Center for the Arts plans to host it all

An old Episcopal church now houses the Epiphany Center for the Arts. It opens in January, and the owner promises money will be raised to provide artistic opportunities to disadvantaged kids.

By [Mitch Dudek](#)



The transformation of a 19th century West Loop church into a concert hall, wedding and party destination, as well as arts center with stage, studio and gallery space for creatives of all sorts — is nearing completion.

There's little else like the Epiphany Center for the Arts at 201 S. Ashland.

In the decommissioned sanctuary, pews have been removed to make room for up to 1,000 concert goers — or dozens of wedding tables, depending on the day — but the church has been largely left intact.

There's plenty to look at if attendees aren't into whatever it is they're attending. Vaulted ceilings, stained glass and other religious artwork are eye catching.

Pipes from a massive church organ flank the altar — where bands will begin performing in late January.

Two other spaces in adjoining buildings that once served as part of parish life will also double as event spaces, galleries and spaces for the performing arts.

Large rooms have been set aside as studio space for artists who work with their hands. An industrial sized kitchen will be available for the culinary arts.

Artists in residence have been selected to use the spaces as well as oversee lectures, conduct workshops, teach art classes and do gallery curation.

The Epiphany Center and its 42,000 square feet of space are a for-profit business.

But a non-profit fund is being established that will allow disadvantaged city kids to take part in its programming.

Though the concert hall will be ready to rock shortly after the new year, construction on much of the rest of the space, which will include a coffee shop, is slated for completion in early spring.

A massive basement, dubbed "The Catacombs," will be part of the mix dedicated to art, partying and education, and there's courtyard space, presided over by one particularly cragged, aged tree, with a massive fire pit.

Epiphany Center is the vision of real estate developer David Chase and his wife, Kimberly Rachal, who previously ran a decorative art glass business. The two were married in the church in 1996, and they live about a block away.

The project has become their passion. And one they hope the community will be proud of.

"That we're able to repurpose what was a place for people to congregate for their own spiritual and mental well-being and put it back into service for a similar purpose, that's what I'm most proud about," Chase said.

"We've retained the character of all the historic elements, and we are preserving that as such."

Chase and several longtime real estate partners poured \$15 million into buying and fixing up the property.

“The idea is to preserve, not restore,” he said.

Various artisans worked on windows and doors as Chase provided a tour recently.

“So yeah, man, it’s a lot of fun,” he said of the process while walking through the church basement that will soon host cocktail parties and house music concerts.

“The first time I came down here I used a broom handle to shove away the cobwebs and make a path,” he said with a laugh.

