

A Sustainable Future for Yale Divinity School

George and Carol Bauer make cornerstone gift for Living Village



George Bauer and Carol Bauer

ESTABLISHED IN 1822 AND WITH ROOTS IN Yale's birth in 1701, Yale Divinity School (YDS) has a long, proud history of training leaders for church and society. The school has continually adapted to meet the demands of the world. Its students engage with critical issues of the day through the blending of faith and intellectual inquiry – including questions around strong communities, social justice, and, more recently, sustainable living.

The present home of YDS, Sterling Divinity Quadrangle, opened in 1932 to both house and educate students. As the school grew over the years, YDS converted much of its student housing to academic and teaching spaces. Today many of the school's 350 students reside off campus.

Gregory E. Sterling, the Henry L. Slack Dean of Yale Divinity School, has a bold vision for YDS's future. Sterling aims to restore the school's residential tradition and foster environmental consciousness with a prospective new complex to be called the Living Village, in recognition of

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how it will both enhance community life and pioneer sustainable university housing. The Living Village is meant to be both an international model for academic campuses and an important eco-theological statement.

The proposed complex, currently in the university approval process, aspires to meet the standards of the Living Building Challenge,



which certifies ecologically sustainable structures. As currently envisioned, the Living Village will be the largest such academic complex on the planet. It will be completely self-sufficient, collecting and refining its water on-site, handling its own waste, producing more solar electricity than it needs, and supplying surplus power to the Sterling Divinity Quadrangle. It will have a zero-carbon footprint and will be constructed of recycled and environmentally friendly materials.

A LANDMARK EXAMPLE

George and Carol Bauer and their family are contributing \$15 million for the project, the largest single philanthropic donation in YDS's history and one of the largest gifts ever made to a divinity school. The Bauers will help fund the construction of the 127,000-square-foot Living Village adjacent to the Sterling Divinity Quadrangle on Prospect Street.

"The Bauers' donation will help us solidify Yale Divinity School's place as a leader in theological education," Sterling says. "Both George and Carol care deeply about the role YDS plays in training students to build community. More than a series of buildings, the village, in tandem with our existing quadrangle, will create a holistic environment, where students will learn, live, and worship together and in harmony with the natural world."

President Salovey expressed confidence that the Living Village will be at the forefront of Yale's ecological efforts and serve as a pathfinder for other universities to follow: "Yale has a deep commitment to environmental sustainability and leading the way to a greener future. The Living Village will be a landmark in environmental design on a university campus and set an example for schools around the world. I am excited that George and Carol have helped us move closer to our goal and thankful to them for their visionary contribution."

The planned Living Village will blend seamlessly into YDS's campus and the meadow behind the Sterling Divinity Quadrangle, as shown in this rendering.

An overhead view showing the planned Living Village and Sterling Divinity Quadrangle on Prospect Street



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THE FIRST TO STEP FORWARD

The Bauers are longtime supporters of the school’s annual fund and have endowed a scholarship. George is a member of the Dean’s Advisory Council and a former trustee of Andover Newton Theological School (now Andover Newton Seminary at YDS). Carol, too, has been a loyal friend to YDS, both as a financial supporter and as a chaplain at Norwalk Hospital, where she trains students planning to pursue chaplaincy after Yale. Since 2015, the Bauers have supported each phase of planning for the new residential complex.

“We are pleased to help launch this extraordinary project,” George Bauer says. “We are always impressed by YDS students, and we know they are going to be the next generation of leaders for the church and world. We are very happy to help YDS create a home where these exceptional people may learn from one another and grow together while having a positive impact on our planet.”

“Our deepest thanks go to George and Carol for supporting this incredible project,” says Sterling. “They were the first to step forward at every stage of the Living Village: the first to step forward when we needed funds for a feasibility

study, the first to step forward when we needed to hire architects to create the design, and now, the first to step forward with a cornerstone gift for construction. They are visionaries who have consistently used their resources to express their values both at YDS and elsewhere.”

UNITING LIVING AND LEARNING

The Living Village will merge with the existing Sterling Divinity Quadrangle in a holistic architectural design that unites living and learning. Students will gain experience in living sustainably, serve as tour guides for visitors, and interact with colleagues across the university who share a commitment to stewardship of the earth.

The village will also address the pressing need to lower costs for students by offering below-market-rate housing options. These accommodations will include one-person studio apartments and small two-bedroom apartments. With lower rental rates for these units, the village will reduce the overall cost of attending YDS.

“By providing critical financial assistance in the form of lower rents, the Living Village will draw more students to Yale and cultivate the values they will need to create a sustainable future,” Sterling says. “Our students will benefit immeasurably. When they graduate, they will bring what they learn here to churches, universities, and organizations around the world.” ■

Donors step up for the Living Village



Samuel W. Croll III '75 MAR and Ann Garner Croll (left), have given to the Living Village project. As co-chair of the Dean's Advisory Council, Sam Croll has focused on sustainability efforts at YDS and advocated for innovation in the return of student residences to campus.

“During the past decade, Yale University has signaled its commitment to sustainability with such programs as the Yale Sustainability Plan 2025 and the Yale Sustainability Leadership Forum,” he notes. “The Living Village at YDS, designed to meet the rigorous standards set by the Living Building Challenge, will serve as a distinct acknowledgment of that commitment.”



Others have given generously to YDS for its areas of greatest need, and the school plans to apply two of these recent gifts to the development of the Living Village.

Clyde Tuggle '88 MDIV and his wife, Mary Streett (middle), are the donors of one such gift. “My alma mater continues to inspire me and many others,” says Tuggle, a member of the Dean's Advisory Council. “Mary and I trust that the school's leadership will continue to deliver the type of transformative experience from which I so richly benefited.”



The Reverend James K. Donnell '58 BD (right), a retired Presbyterian minister from Pennsylvania, has also given. Rev. Donnell is a longtime supporter of student scholarships through decades of giving to the YDS Annual Fund. He shares his appreciation for the experience, faculty, and fellow students that prepared him for his career. “Yale provided me with a fine education and basis for my ministry,” he says. “You could really broaden your horizons by meeting people who were studying many different things.”