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Pope Leo XIV's hometown is poised to buy his childhood home after the south Chicago suburb's board voted unanimously July 1 to purchase the property, hoping it will breathe new life into a village saddled with financial woes.

Since Pope Leo XIV was elected Pope Francis' successor, the new pope's childhood home — a small, two-story house in Dolton, Illinois, about 20 miles south of Chicago — has drawn visitors from across the country with many treating it as a pilgrimage site.

Cardinal Robert Prevost made history by becoming the first pope from the United States — a stunning decision that Chicagoans celebrated by flocking to churches and sharing memes.

Prevost was born in 1955 in the South Side Chicago neighborhood of Bronzeville and grew up in suburban Dolton, near St. Mary of the Assumption, where he attended Mass and elementary school. He later studied theology at the Catholic Theological Union of Chicago in the Hyde Park neighborhood and taught in local Catholic schools, including at St. Rita High School.

Dolton Mayor Jason House called purchasing the pope's childhood home a "once-in-a-lifetime opportunity" during a July 1 meeting of the Dolton Village Board. The childhood homes of other popes have often been turned into museums or pilgrimage sites.

The property was put up for auction online with a [reserve price of \\$250,000](#) around the time Leo was installed as pope, The New York Times reported. It sold in 2024 for \$66,000, the Times reported.

"This is a proud moment for our village and an opportunity, and we want to make sure that we're doing it justice," House said.

Yet several residents at the July 1 meeting were skeptical about any benefit to taxpayers, questioning whether the financially strained village could afford to purchase the home and maintain the streets surrounding it.

The board hired former Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot to probe the village's finances last year, and she found Dolton's bank accounts had been depleted. The village was \$3.65 million in debt and had unpaid bills piling up.

The childhood home of Pope Leo XIV is pictured in the Dolton suburb of Chicago May 9, 2025.

The childhood home of Pope Leo XIV is pictured in the Dolton suburb of Chicago May 9, 2025. The Village of Dolton intends to purchase the childhood home of Pope Leo, hoping to turn the property and its surroundings into a historical site. (OSV News photo/Carlos Osorio, Reuters)

Dolton gained national attention amid allegations of its former Mayor Tiffany Henyard's financial mismanagement, corruption and failure to follow state transparency laws by turning over spending and other records.

"Purchasing the pope's residence is admirable." Dolton resident Mary Avent told the board on Tuesday. "But with the state we're in right now, I guess my concern is, do we have the money?"

House said he is committed to repairing the streets surrounding Prevost's childhood home and assured residents he understood their concerns. Still, he said the sale will likely close within two weeks.

The house's listed owner did not immediately respond to a request for comment July 2.

"We can either seize this moment going forward or we can let that moment go to an investor," House said. "I would like our community to get the benefit of this opportunity."

[Read this next: Pope Leo XIV's election gives new hope to Dolton, Ill., and the church that formed him](#)

Other board members echoed the mayor's excitement over the purchase, as some spoke of how the childhood homes of Michael Jackson and Martin Luther King Jr. offered economic opportunity to their communities. A recent post on the village's Facebook account showed workers repairing the house's roof and celebrated the home for "bringing new energy and attention to our village."

Gino Ferrari, president of Windy City Construction Group, said he offered the full roof replacement for free to the current owner, saying he "wanted to make sure this roof lasts a long time." In front of the home, the company put up a sign with an image of Pope Leo XIV and the words "Pope Leo's childhood home" and "A roof for the pope's roots."

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Pope Leo XIV appears at the window of his apartment in the Apostolic Palace to bless the faithful gathered in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican June 29. (AP/Andrew Medichini)

As crews worked on the roof Tuesday, they chatted with neighbors who offered them water and bike riders who traveled along the lakefront from Chicago to see the house.

"Dolton has been through a lot in the last few years, so this is such a great, positive moment for Dolton," Ferrari said. "The community seems pretty excited."

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