

THE PARISH OF SAINT MONICA 10-YEAR “MASTER PLAN” FAQS

CHURCH BUILDING

The drawings show a pipe organ. Is a pipe organ in the plans? Wouldn't such an instrument be too expensive and way beyond the funds originally allocated to an “electronic” organ from the Heritage of Faith campaign? Wouldn't the pipes from a pipe organ necessitate a significant reconstruction (raising) of the church ceiling and church roof?

Structurally, the diagrams show two depictions of a choir loft on which “an organ” (electronic or pipe) would be placed. The Choir Loft has been designed to accommodate either option and the “Master Plan” has considered the integration of the organ either way.

In terms of finances, funds for an electronic organ are already available. No additional funds for a new electronic organ are included in any of the “Options” presented. Current discussions about the installation of a pipe organ foresee an instrument that “potentially” would be made available (possibly leased) to St. Monica on favorable terms, that might even be less expensive than a new electronic organ. Funding for the long-term maintenance of a pipe organ have also been considered and addressed and therefore were not necessary to include in any of the three “Options” presented. Also, regardless on any decision involving a new organ, the necessity of building a larger, higher roof are not necessary.

Will something be done to improve the acoustics of the church? Quite often it's difficult to hear.

The church acoustics are a concern that was addressed in the Master Plan. Acoustics in a church necessitates a balance of a soft, echo tone that enhances music vs. a sharper, crisper tone that helps in the proclamation of the Word of God and preaching. The “Master Plan” examined the results of an “acoustical study” that was done at St. Monica in 2010 by Riedel & Associates (a nationally renowned acoustical consulting company). In general, the acoustical measurements of St. Monica are within a reasonable range to address both issues. Nevertheless, certain “dead zones” and the way the sound is cast around the inside of the building needs to be improved including a new sound system, the position of the Choir, speakers and microphone placement.

The proposed choir loft would reposition the music activities in a way that is acoustically favorable. An additional benefit of locating the Choir in a loft above the Nave would be the acquiring of additional floor space in the Nave that would be opened to accommodate parish growth and additional seating. Compared to many other local Catholic churches, the pew seating could stand to be increased to allow for future growth (30 up to ~50 additional seats).

What is the current seating capacity of the church? If a choir loft was installed what would be the additional capacity after the project?

According to the architect's study, the seating capacity of the church is approximately 450. The addition of a choir loft would allow for an additional 30 to ~50 people.

PARISH CENTER AND OLD SCHOOL BUILDING

Many families feel nostalgia for the Old School Building. Can something be done to repurpose that building?

The valid emotional attachment to the old school history is something about we are quite sensitive. It would be the intention of the architect to look at what aspects of the old school could be utilized in any new/ repurposed construction to make a “living bridge” between this important part of the history of the parish and the future of the parish.

Is there asbestos in the Old School? How will that affect the plans for the building?

There was an asbestos sanitation done during the renovation of the parish center and the old school. Some asbestos tiles might still be in place along with asbestos covering of some of the piping, but these are small in scope.

In the absence of a school, how are we planning to/can we use those facilities as a feeder for our parish?

First, our school is not “closed” but is currently being used under a lease arrangement with Green Valley Academy. This arrangement has allowed the parish of St. Monica to realize a significant and positive cash flow for the next three years, which has allowed St. Monica Parish to achieve several of its “strategic” pastoral goals (such as the hiring of a “Youth and Family Minister full-time instead of part time and perform necessary emergency repairs with no adverse effect on parish finances). This would not have been possible without the availability of a (relatively) newly renovated school facility.

PARISH SUPPORT, STAFF AND AREA

Why do we need changes to the staff space?

If one enters the rectory offices, one cannot help but see that the “working space” environment of the parish staff is sub-standard. The addition of the new “Family and Youth Minister” will necessitate him being “shoe-horned” into an already crowded space that was originally a convent dining room. There is really only two places for small groups/organizations to meet on campus and both are located at opposite ends of the campus (Conference Meeting Room in the rectory and the Hagenbach Room in Parish Center). As parish activity has increased in recent months, both rooms have become a scheduling “bottleneck” as more organizations require meeting space.

Ideally there should also be a separation between the private residential quarters of the priests - and the “Business Management” aspects of the Parish Offices. A separate area for Parish Offices should allow for greater dual use of certain meeting rooms, copy/work rooms and public rest rooms while at the same time providing for ADA compliant barrier-free accessibility. As fewer priests are available in the future, many parishes today (including St. Monica) see the need for more pastoral staff required to administrate the parish mission, facilities and business-related activities of the parish. The staff rightly requires an appropriate business environment to effectively do their jobs. Wherever possible, parishes are attempting to address these “temporal” aspects of the parish while also avoiding the necessity for priests to “live over top of the shop”.

Two-part question: Will the Rectory remain “as-is” under the plan?

There are several short-term “safety” repairs to the rectory in “Option 1.” “Options” 2 and 3 have more extensive remodeling of the first floor of the rectory.

Even if the rectory remains, the offices will move?

It is not foreseen that the rectory offices would move to another location under any of the presented options.

Where will the office for the new Director of Family and Youth Ministry be?

In the rectory, in the same room as the Religious Education offices.

Are any changes being considered to the Religious Education program as part of the Master Plan?

The Religious Education Program would not be affected by the “Master Plan.”

MISCELLANEOUS MASTER PLAN DETAILS**Three options were presented: we would like a better description of how they are different. Why aren’t all of the things in Option 1 in Option 3? How does the plan flow from Option 1 through Option 3?**

The use of the wording “Phase I” on the top of the handouts was unfortunate and somewhat confusing (I apologize – Fr Zlock). To implement every aspect of the entire Master Plan would take about 10 years (and would cost close to \$12 million). The scope of such a project would not be feasible for St. Monica at this time given our current size, our parishioner participation rate, finances and demographics. Thus we are looking to do “something” over the next 5 years. Look at “Options” 1, 2 and 3 as three separate approaches to simultaneously address:

- 1. Urgent, “mission-critical” and necessary repairs and maintenance as well as ...*
- 2. Parish Priorities.*

The necessary repairs and maintenance are addressed in all three options. The difference between “Options” 1, 2 or 3 is how much of the parish priorities St. Monica would like to tackle over the next 5 years. The “Feasibility Study” will allow the parishioners of St. Monica to, in effect, “cast their vote” on what they would like to achieve.

What roofing is needed/included in the plans?

The roofs on both the Gym and the church proper are approaching 25 years of use. Although both roofs are currently “holding,” some cracks are already developing and it is foreseen that more substantial leaks could occur over the next several years. Thus plans to replace both roofs are included in all three “Options.”

Has there been any consideration of the use of solar panels? Would that be cost effective?

The architect would consider the latest energy-saving technology in any future plans.

Regarding the Youth focus reflected in the surveys, without a school, which “Youth” are we building for? What portion of the Master Plan funding is allocated to Youth?

An emphasis on our “youth” came from the parishioners of St. Monica and was expressed in both the 2010 and 2013 Parish Surveys as one of the three “Parish Priorities.” The research done by The Remington Group (consultants) and GKO Architects further confirmed this. It is important to note that the St. Monica School represented an important, yet by no means the only active youth constituency in the parish (18% of grade-school children and 9% of all parish youth). The intention is to form all of our parish youth (grade-school, high-school and young adult) together with their families in the future. The re-renovation of the youth space in the Old School, representing 4% of the costs of “Option 1,” along with the recent hiring of a new Youth and Family Minister, are two initiatives to accomplish this.

What is the purpose of the Welcome Center? Why do we need it? Is it a fad in newly constructed churches and not really essential?

Since we are looking for ways to grow St. Monica Parish, it is important to have a place to properly greet parishioners, new congregants and visitors by having a place for them to socialize that is convenient to use. Thus it is an important consideration to provide social space, which should be distinctly separate from worship space. In light of this, the purpose of the Welcome Center is to provide a space adjacent to the Church for secular activities to occur (providing information, donuts and coffee, place to display announcements, greeting and socialization area, place for coat storage and access to public rest rooms).

With a “Welcome Center” in place, the Narthex (front entrance to the church proper) can be reserved as a personal and theological “transitional space” from the everyday world outside the church to the spiritual world inside the Nave (main body of the church). Our narthex currently is used as a place of commerce, loud noise, socializing etc. We are looking at ways to allow parishioners to transition from “modern life and reality” through a distinctive transition space into the sacred quiet of the worship space.

Finally, the current bathrooms in the welcome center are not fully “handicap accessible.” A new welcome center would allow us to accommodate this better.

What is a “Fellowship Hall?”

A “Fellowship Hall” is not the Welcome Center. “Fellowship Hall” was alternate wording used for a larger social space located within the campus.

FINANCING

What will happen during the Feasibility Study? Will each parishioner be called, receive a mailing...?

6 companies responded to the Feasibility Study “Request for a Proposal.” Although the approach for each company is different, there is a significant degree of overlap that is standard for feasibility studies. This “could” include any or all of the following:

- *Personal Interviews of Select/ Key/ Influential Parishioners*
- *Personal Interviews of Major Donors.*
- *Interviews of Parish Council Members.*
- *Interviews of Parish Staff.*
- *Interviews of School and Religious Education Parents.*
- *Other Focus Groups.*
- *In-Pew Surveys.*

The Feasibility Study would involve the following:

- *Meet with Parish Leadership.*
- *Gather research material about the parish*
- *Crystallize the “case statement.”*
- *Discuss and approve materials to be used and distributed.*
- *Present a “Preliminary Report.”*
- *Test the data.*
- *Present a “Final Report.”*

Two-part question: We had a “Capital Campaign;” did that go through the Archdiocese?

Any “Capital Campaign” that has been done at St. Monica was approved by the archdiocese.

Even with the past Capital Campaign, our school was still closed. What assurances do we have this time?

First, the school is not “closed” but is currently being used under a lease arrangement with Green Valley Academy. This arrangement has allowed the parish of St. Monica to realize a significant and positive cash flow for the next three years, which has allowed St. Monica Parish to achieve several of its “strategic” pastoral goals (such as the hiring of a “Youth and Family Minister full-time instead of part time and the completion of necessary emergency repairs. This has been accomplished with no adverse effect on parish finances). This would not have been possible without the availability of a (relatively) newly renovated school facility.

Second, some of what is decided might be impacted by the pending “Pastoral Planning Area #200” study which has not definitely been scheduled but which “could” occur over the next 2 – 4 years. This “self study” would examine the parishes of St. Patrick, St. Norbert, St. Monica, St. Isaac Jogues and Our Lady of the Assumption. Any of the “Options” considered by St. Monica would require the approval of several boards and oversight committees of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Approving any plans of St. Monica would

potentially place the archdiocese “on the hook” in terms of considering – up front – the risk of allowing St. Monica to move forward, knowing that the results of the PPA #200 study are still pending. It would benefit the archdiocese to express, as early as possible, any reservations or concerns about our plans, or to grant a more favorable status to St. Monica in order to assure our parishioners that their investment would be protected.

Third, no concrete “assurances” have been provided by the archdiocese (and such assurances probably will not be forthcoming). The Pastor, representatives of the Parish Staff, Parish Councils and other parishioners in leadership positions met with Bishop McIntyre and archdiocesan officials last year. The Pastor met with the Bishop again along with members of the Secretariat for Temporal Affairs this year. The Pastor expressed the concern of parishioners about the risk of investing in the future of the parish given the past history of investing in a school that was subsequently closed. Thus they are well aware of this concern.

How firm are the cost figures attached to the options? Do these numbers include funding for the Feasibility Study?

The cost figures were developed by the Remington Group consulting company in cooperation with GKO Architects. GKO enlisted the expertise of mechanical engineers, structural engineers, electrical engineers and plumbing experts. The figures were vetted by the Facilities Committee whose members include an Architect, a Construction Manager, a member of the local Town Council, an Engineering Consultant and people with executive business experience. GKO and Remington integrated the 2010 acoustics study done by Riedel and Associates. Finally members of the parish with theological and liturgical expertise were consulted in matters pertaining to the worship space. Thus the cost figures, as well as the pastoral and liturgical aspects of the “Master Plan,” were carefully and professionally developed and proposed by professionals and then vetted by a consultant as well as parishioners who are directly employed and experienced in such ventures.

The “Feasibility Study” will be paid out of operating budget funds.

Is the rectory subject to taxes? *(not clear if the questioner was referring to real estate taxes, taxes resulting from the renovations, or...)*

The living space of the rectory is taxed.

What happened to the money the parish was supposed to get from the Archdiocesan “Heritage of Faith” capital campaign?

Monies from the Heritage Fund continue to be held in a reserve account.

Question Received from E-mails from Parishioners

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You've said replacing the 'air handlers' requires a crane and removing part of the roof. The design for Option 2 and 3 seems to have closed walls and roof as well - does the design include a way for our parish to not have the same problem 20 -25 years from now when the new system will need to be replaced?

The most efficient operation of the A/C system requires that they be placed above the area to be cooled. This means on the upper floor. In the plans prepared by the architects and HVAC engineers both the compressor and the air handling units will be under cover. The current installation has the compressor units exposed to the weather, and the air handlers under roof. With a planned maintenance routine followed, we will get the longest longevity. Ultimately, the units will have to be replaced, and most likely that means using a lift and removing them through the non-structural, internal walls.

Is there any way to avoid cutting into the roof to replace the equipment by bringing in modules and completing the final assembly onsite?

The units are factory assembled, and to disassemble and reassemble is costly, and give opportunity for error. To reduce the cost of church construction, the existing units were installed by use of a crane as the church was built. Basically the church was built around the units. Removal of the existing malfunctioning compressor units is difficult because of the way the church was built and will involve lifting (by crane) from the portico roof. The air handlers will have to come through the adjacent walls, not the roof. However, the plan calls for extending the roof, in which case units can be removed / replaced during the re-structure process.

I think the narthex expansion is a good idea. The existing narthex is a single story structure. Why does the proposed expansion have to be a two-story structure? Why can't the design simply replace the equipment in existing mechanical rooms and expand the narthex as a single story structure?

In order to take advantage of more cost efficient A/C systems, rather than two separate systems, a single system is planned. Covering the units with a new roof extension contributes to a long term efficiency by keeping the units out of the weather. No matter what plan is chosen, the current units have to be replaced.

In addition, the current spacing configuration does not lend itself to easy maintenance / replacement / repair of the equipment. The proposed design would address this.

Could the narthex expansion in option 2 be divided into a welcome area and narthex, rather than building a separate welcome center? Not ideal, but would it be sufficient in the short term?

The current configuration address the intersection of theological, liturgical, fellowship and practical issues associated with the front of the church. With a "Welcome Center" in place, the Narthex (front entrance to the church proper) can be reserved as a personal and theological "transitional space" from the everyday world outside the church to the spiritual world inside the Nave (main body of the church). Our narthex currently is used as a place of commerce, loud noise, socializing etc. The suggested approach allows parishioners to transition from "modern life and reality" through a distinctive transition space into the sacred quiet of the worship space.

The other issue here is "Short Term". The Master Plan foresees a long-term focus, which requires the integration of an evangelization campaign designed to grow the parish population significantly. If we plan small, we stay small, which may leave us open to future consolidation.

The Welcome Center seems overwhelming in size, yet the purpose is understood. Could we accomplish the two needs of a "transitional space" and a "social gathering space" in another way? Is it possible for the expanded narthex to have a divider to incorporate both spaces within that one unit?

In terms of footprint, the proposed "Welcome Center" is actually reasonably sized. The space would have about the same footprint as the tent that we utilized at Christmas to display the architect's drawings. The architect had to consider numerous competing factors from the parishioner "wish list" (Children's Liturgy of the Word, sufficient space for socials, a welcome desk, etc...) while maintaining a cost effective design. In addition, the Welcome Center would address the need to more and larger, "ADA compliant" bathrooms for both men and women.

Option 2/3 descriptions include "select critical short-term items from maintenance list." It's not clear which items are not included in Options 2 and 3. What Option 1 items are not covered in Option 2/3, How much cost is being postponed. Will those items have to be funded out of general parish revenues when the work does need to be done?

By undertaking options two and three all the major and minor maintenance items are covered. By doing them all they can be incorporated into the new construction plan, and done at less cost as a percentage of the whole. Postponing (deferred maintenance) repairs escalates geometrically with time.

What additional costs are incurred for delaying the implementation of options 2 or 3 of phase I to a later date, excluding costs due to inflation?

Undertaking the options separately, and over time, in addition to rising costs, we will incur costs such as duplication of mobilization, in some cases having to remove structure already in place, move HVAC and other systems. So, in the end, the whole project cost is inflated. Although no exact dollar figures were proposed, architects, consultants, and engineers all said that it would be significant. Parishioners and professionals involved in the Master Plan have had experience in multi-million dollar construction/re-construction projects and can attest that this has been their finding over decades.

**Is there flexibility to do portions of Option 2 or 3 without doing all of these options?
Can there be some mix and match between options?**

The short answer is, no. The reason Remington and GKO were retained was to examine the parish priorities, integrate these with other concerns and desires from conversations with parishioners “wish list,” then, over the course of 9 months and in consultation with other engineers and consultant, blend these and create a series of options that were long-term, comprehensive and cost-effective. The proposed options were the best solution to a highly complex set of factors for the long-term benefit of S. Monica.

Option 2 has more renovations in the parish center. Are those minor renovations?

The initial renovations would be according to the wishes of the parishioners which would include a repaired/renovated Hagenbach Room and a re-purposed cafeteria better suited for the “Parish Priority” of “Fellowship.” Additional items would include necessary longer-term repairs (but of a non-critical nature), but no major “renovations.”

What determines the option chosen? Is it strictly the monies collected? Or will there be a poll of some kind as to what the parishioners want done and not done now that the plans are drawn?

*The main non-negotiable “driver” of this entire project has been the substantial amount of critical repair/replacement/maintenance issues facing, a significant amount that **has to** be performed within the next 12 months. The Master Plan was conceived to offer parishioners additional options based on stated “parish priorities” in order to enhance the parish facilities, in order to support the future of the parish.*

The feasibility study will determine our capability and capacity to do this. The decision, as addressed on several occasions by our pastor, is up to me, the members of Saint Monica Church. Conversations with Cunneen and Associates (who will conduct the feasibility study) will include a parish-wide questionnaire as well as personal interviews with parishioners. This will solicit and address opinions on (among others) parish vision, mission, stewardship of facilities as well as the parish’s willingness/ability to financially support the vision.

It is my understanding that there are no revisions planned for the cry room. What are the thoughts on this? I heard you mention this as an area of concern in one of your homilies.

Over the years the “Cry Room” has not only been little used by parents with little children, but frequented by adults for some uncharted reasons. Parents with small children have been encouraged by parishioners and have welcomed the opportunity to sit in with the rest of the congregation. What is envisioned in the plans is to have a place in the narthex, where parents can take a child if and when needed.

I realize that the old school building renovation is quite large and should not be tackled before our parish shows real signs of growth, especially in the eyes of the Archdiocese. However, if options 2 and/or 3 of phase I were not undertaken at this time, could the old school renovations be considered before those renovations in the future?

*In the midst of the Master Plan study, all facilities were examined and the Old School was considered for a total renovation. However, early on the architects, engineers, and contractors said the cost would be prohibitive, and we would wind up with a smaller and less useful structure, which did not fit long-term needs. In addition the modifications contemplated for the old school meet only one of the parish priorities, whereas those in options 2 and 3 address **all three** of the priorities.*

In Option 2 drawings, it looks as if the rose window will not be visible from inside the church. Is there a way to alter the design to allow it to be visible as we walk to the rear of the church?

The rose window will be preserved, but will not be visible as one leaves the nave of the church. It will be visible from the outside, and from the expanded narthex.

If the choir loft is built, will the piano be placed there as well? If not, where will it go without costing seating?

The current grand piano would remain on the ground floor of the church and be stored in a suitable location when not in use during worship or concerts. The piano footprint is modest and would not require a large amount of space that would otherwise be used for seating.

What is the purpose of the new lift (elevator?) proposed in option 3 in the Welcome Center?

The elevator is not planned for the "Welcome Center" but is to be placed in such a way to provide access to the choir loft. Considering the broad range of parishioners who sing in the choir, as well as hopefully in the future, an elevator would be necessary to meet the needs of elderly and handicapped.

A second elevator is planned should the addition of a Parish Ministry Center be realized. This lift would connect all three levels of the school, rendering that structure more viable for future tenants. It will also serve the parish center and meet the needs of elderly and handicapped.

The acoustics of the church are to be improved. And the possible choir loft will place the organ above the nave. Currently, the organ is quite powerful and often overpowers the voices of the singers. If a pipe organ is acquired, wouldn't this be even more powerful for our small church? Will having it in a loft make that much difference in how loud it is?

The current failing electronic organ is not too powerful but is heard as "concentrated." One-dimensional sound coming from a concentrated arrangement of speakers will sound differently than a wider array of pipes or differently installed speakers. Think of your television being loud from only its internal speakers versus the sound through a surround sound system. The experience is quite different and has little to do with 'volume.' Pipes, properly placed in the room, would bring an authentic, three-dimensional sound to the worship experience.

How will the acquisition of a pipe organ as opposed to a new electronic organ be determined? Will it be the decision of the Music Minister, the parishioners, or merely finances? Will a poll be taken to see what the parish community wants?

The parish currently has about one quarter million dollars in a restricted account dedicated for church organ replacement. That instrument in whatever form is a crucial part of the liturgical priority. While it has been buried in history, the original church was fitted with a pipe organ.

Given the youth/family parish priority and the recent hiring of a full-time youth minister, would it not be prudent to let our new youth minister have input to this plan after getting to know the Saint Monica community?

Jason Carter (newly hired Youth and Family Minister) has been fully apprised on current parish discussions. His opinions have also been solicited already in areas relevant to his ministry.