

“Building for the Future” Update

For nearly two centuries, the people of St. Jerome Parish have cared for the buildings and ministries entrusted to them. Each generation has worked to ensure that our parish remains a place where faith is celebrated, taught, and lived. Today, our parish leadership has been studying how best to prepare our facilities for the future.

In January 2023, Fr. Darrell asked the Parish Pastoral Council, Parish Finance Committee, and Buildings and Grounds Committee to begin a careful evaluation of all parish buildings and to develop a long-range facilities plan. Over several months the committees reviewed each building, considering how frequently it is used, which parish groups use it, the cost of utilities and insurance, maintenance expenses, and the overall condition of each structure.

Challenges We Face: Many of our buildings contain aging heating and cooling systems that are inefficient and sometimes unreliable. Some buildings are underused, which increases costs and maintenance needs. St. John Bosco Hall presents the greatest challenge. Because of its age, multi-level design, outdated systems, and lack of accessibility, renovating the building would be extremely costly compared with constructing a new facility designed for today’s needs. Many parishioners who regularly use our current facilities are aware of their limitations, including noisy window air conditioners, unreliable heating systems, and limited accessibility. Because of these issues, there has been strong interest in exploring a long-term solution.

The Planning Process: In May 2023, Marcum Engineering and PFGW Architects met with parish leadership and diocesan representatives to assess the campus. Their professional review found that while the buildings are generally structurally sound, many systems are outdated, inefficient, and not fully accessible. An information meeting was held on October 27, 2024, with concept drawings/building plans, along with potential costs were presented to parish members. Parishioners also had an opportunity to leave written suggestions and comments. The information gathering, evaluations, and decision-making process has not been taken lightly nor rushed. Careful consideration has been taken for each option and path to move forward.

The Proposed Plan: Parish committees are recommending a plan that would simplify and strengthen our campus. The proposal includes demolishing St. John Bosco Hall and constructing a new one-story multipurpose parish building on the

same site. The new building would allow many parish activities currently spread across several buildings to be brought together in one accessible and efficient space. After the new building is completed, the plan would also include the demolition of the Youth House and Saints Martha and Mary Hall, and possibly St. Benedict Hall. This would significantly reduce the number of buildings the parish must maintain, as well as utilities, insurance, and upkeep. Overall, this plan would reduce the total building space on campus from about 29,300 square feet to about 15,680 square feet—a reduction of approximately 46 percent! This would lower long-term maintenance costs and improve accessibility and efficiency without reducing any activities, services, or educational spaces. Removing the Youth House would allow for additional parking near the church and provide more green space. Removing Saints Martha and Mary Hall would allow construction of a parking area to serve the new building, parish events, and the annual parish picnic. These changes would help address long-standing parking challenges on the parish campus.

How the Building Would Be Used: The proposed building would support many parish ministries and activities, including religious education classes for middle and high school students, Vacation Bible School, Camp Connect, and other youth programs. It would also provide space for senior gatherings, quilting groups, parish meetings, smaller funeral meals, recreational activities such as weekly basketball, and other parish and community events.

Financial Considerations: The cost of the project has not been finalized; however, the amount will be made known as soon as it is available. The parish currently has no outstanding financial obligations to the Diocese of Owensboro. Initial funding for the project would come from bequests left to the parish, as well as a future capital campaign. Beginning in April/May a feasibility study for the capital campaign will be conducted as part of the next phase of planning.

Looking to the Future: Founded in 1836, St. Jerome Parish has always invested in facilities that support worship, education, and community life. The buildings we use today were built by earlier generations who planned for the future of the parish.

The “Building for the Future” project continues that tradition. By creating a more efficient and accessible campus, we hope to strengthen our ability to provide faith formation, support parish life, and serve our community for many years to come.

Parish leadership will continue to keep parishioners informed as the process moves forward.