

**St. Ferdinand Catholic Church
Feasibility Study Report
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Part 1: Background information on the SFC Feasibility Study

Q1: Why would St. Ferdinand Parish spend money to develop a feasibility study report?

A1: Feasibility studies are research studies akin to those that precede investment in a new business or business franchise. Entrepreneurs know that it is not enough simply to believe in a new business concept or direction. As investors, they demand objective research to determine that the likelihood of success is high. They need to know that there is sufficient need for the services, products or facilities that are being proposed. Their feasibility research leads to a preliminary business plan with documents about the risks and advantages of a new direction. .

Similarly, SFC parishioners are being asked to invest in the future of the Parish through a multi-million dollar campaign for building spaces that will support parish programs and services. Feasibility studies by universities, colleges and private schools (done before approving new building or renovation campaigns) are analogous to those done for churches. The values of those feasibility studies are to:

- Determine the nature and degree of support by constituents for a campaign project
- Use obtained information to determine the funds likely to result from a capital campaign
- Assess whether the investment of staff time and resources for a campaign is warranted
- Provide information regarding the factors that will affect the success of a campaign, and
- Assimilate valuable insights for later use in the campaign if it is approved.

St. Ferdinand Parish minimizes its risk and maximizes its potential of success by conducting a feasibility study before deciding to begin a 3-5 year, capital campaign for new spaces. The study uses survey information to estimate the likely dollar amount it can raise for capital improvements.

Q2: How is a feasibility study conducted?

A2: A feasibility study is research into the beliefs, ideas, attitudes and expectations of individuals whose support of a new parish initiative is critical to the success of that initiative. A cross-section of the parish is surveyed about the proposed initiative to determine whether fundraising toward it is a goal that they understand, believe in, and support. The feasibility study allows the leaders of the proposed initiative to make a more informed decision as to the fund-worthiness of the proposed goal before expending significant sums on marketing, strategic plans and staff. More about the feasibility study process is explained in **Part 2** of this report summary.

Q3: We already know from our space needs committee and town hall meetings that we need new parish spaces. What does a feasibility study add that is not already known?

A3: The study's results section (**Part 3**) compiles the thoughts and beliefs when people speak confidentially about aspects of the proposed project. You learn the following:

- In general, do the views of surveyed individuals complement the direction of the Parish?
- What lessons can be learned from previous campaigns that were conducted?
- What stewardship to donors occurred previously?
- What fundraising processes were used?
- What is the perception of parishioners regarding the plans of the Parish leadership?
- How should history affect the strategies and decisions of this campaign?
- Are patterns of support and advocacy evident that are likely to exist throughout the Parish?
- Do those surveyed consider the campaign a high enough priority to sacrifice their time, talent and treasure for the duration of the campaign, construction and post-campaign transitions?
- Are those surveyed able to explain the new project's results in clear and compelling terms?

- What terms are used repeatedly enough to frame the marketing and branding of a campaign?
- Do people support the project simply because others in leadership roles say that it is needed?
- Is their support superficial or substantive?
- What needs are seen as being met by the building complex and the campaign?
- Are these needs immediate, future-focused or both?
- Are those surveyed interested in the entire project or just a few aspects of the overall project?

The results section will provide answers for each of the above questions.

Q4: What will be done with the feasibility study results?

A4: The conclusion and recommendation sections of the feasibility study include proposed solutions to perceived problems and obstacles found during the survey. Those solutions come as a fresh viewpoint from an objective outsider with experience conducting capital campaigns. Parish committees then analyze whether those problems are surmountable and whether the proposed solutions are appropriate for the culture of St. Ferdinand.

Assuming that the campaign is approved, parish committees then can plan marketing and fundraising so that negatives are neutralized or turned into positives, and so that unclear elements of the project are clarified. Finally, a careful analysis of the study, together with other available data (Blackbaud parishioner research and Parish financial reports), allow the Parish to make an informed decision about approving the investment of 3-5 years, many dollars and the time of many people in a capital campaign. If that decision is to conduct a capital campaign, then the feasibility study is designed to serve as the backbone of the campaign's strategic and marketing plan.

Part 2: Feasibility Study Process

1. The Pastor and the Space Needs Committee approved having a Feasibility Study. The consultant's proposal to interview 50-60 people was raised by the Pastor to 75 people (10/07)
2. The consultant met with a parish Feasibility Committee to determine and list internal and external factors that might affect the feasibility of the building project or its capital campaign (10/17/07)
3. The consultant wrote a draft set of questions to address, in a comprehensive fashion, the factors raised by the committee (10/18/07)
4. The Pastor reviewed the drafted questions and directed that staff be interviewed (10/25/07)
5. The committee met again to analyze and improve the question set (11/07/07)
6. The consultant rewrote these questions as the committee directed and sent the revisions to them by e-mail for additional modifications – no additional changes were proposed (11/08/07)
7. The Pastor reviewed and approved the final set of questions (**Attachment 1**) (11/08/07)
8. The Feasibility Committee nominated individuals to be surveyed. The committee also recommended that recent, younger parishioners be surveyed (11/08-14/07)
9. The Pastor selected five recent, younger parishioners from a list of forty parishioners who joined St. Ferdinand since 2006 (11/14/07)
10. As a result, 79 individuals were nominated including 7 couples.
11. The consultant drafted an invitation letter to potential interviewees. The Pastor modified the invitation and then, the revised letter was mailed to each external nominee and distributed to each staff member (**Attachment 2**) (11/14/07)
12. The consultant notified the committee by e-mail that the study had begun (11/15/07)
13. The consultant conducted interviews (11/07-1/08). Ultimately, there were 63 interviews of 72 people.
14. The consultant reviewed the data, determined patterns and significant comments, collected ideas from the interviewees and wrote a report to the Pastor and Finance Committee (1/08)
15. The consultant reviewed the drafted report with the Pastor (1/30/08) and with campaign related committees [Feasibility, Finance, Space Needs, Development, Building] (1/31/08)

16. The Parish decided whether to proceed with the capital campaign with a strategic plan and marketing plan. (2/08) (*Feasibility Study is completed*)

The consultant drafts a campaign strategic plan as an extension of the feasibility study (2/08)The consultant is hired as campaign director (Job description - Attachment 3) (11/11/07). Assuming a positive decision, the quiet phase of the campaign begins after the strategic plan is reviewed and approved by a process to be determined. (3/08)

Part 3: Results and Conclusions

(Data-driven results will be listed first as bulleted comments; Conclusions will follow results as italicized paragraphs that analyze the entire interview in terms of the campaign's feasibility while answering the numbered question. For question #1 only, the categories are labeled to clarify the procedure.

Recommendations will be listed as a separate section (**Part 4**) to begin a compilation of marketing and implementation ideas for the strategic plan in the event that the campaign is approved for implementation.

In general, do the views of surveyed individuals complement the direction of the Parish?

Results

- Almost all of those interviewed spoke of the transience of the SFC and Cranberry communities, yet only 6 of 72 expected to move away within 5-10 years.
- A majority of those interviewed are active in one or more Parish programs and/or groups.
- Many spoke that more volunteers are needed instead of the "same core doing everything".
- Most (91%) of the interviewees are first generation members of the Parish with relatively few (9%) having relatives other than immediate family who also are SFC parishioners.
- Many spoke of the family feeling that the Parish engendered.
- A high percentage of those in the survey are married with both spouses working.
- The demographics listed for Cranberry (zip code 16066) is much younger than that of those interviewed for this survey even though the feasibility committee attempted to gather a cross-section of the parish.
- Four were interviewed whose ages appeared to be in their 20s and 30s. Most appeared to be mid 40s and above. Ages were not asked.
- There was diversity based on interests, job types, parish roles, and balance between the genders but little evidence of ethnic diversity.
- Most (59 of 70) felt that this is the right time for a capital campaign, yet less than half were confident that the \$10M goal could be raised in 3-5 years. (5 – no, 28 – don't know or maybe, 28 – yes)
- Very few had experience in capital campaigns as fundraisers (5) or as participants (15), and few were knowledgeable about potential large donors in the Parish.
- Most (57 of 72) saw the SFC Parish as growing and dynamic.
- All comments about the pastor's approachability and skills as a homilist were compliment laden; several strongly suggested the need for more pastoral leadership to improve communication, cooperation, support and understanding about the SFC building plans.

Conclusions

The individuals surveyed for this study are likely to be older, more involved and more knowledgeable about the Parish and its directions than the average SFC parishioner. The comments of these individuals seemed generally knowledgeable and supportive about the building plans and direction of the Parish, but varied significantly in their depth of understanding of the purposes and benefits of this campaign. Even SFC staff did not have similar language or perceptions in describing this potential campaign direction. The most common phrase was "we need more space", but most of those interviewed described only a small subsection of the project. Few could speak capably about the project's long-term or programmatic impact even when prompted. Below is a statement from one interviewee that summarizes the need for better communication to build support, branding and understanding for an SFC building expansion.

"It is hard to visualize the building concept.
I'm still trying to put the puzzle pieces together.
...the plan will not meet future needs.
We will outgrow the buildings before they are built"

What stewardship to donors occurred previously?

Stewardship involves communication with and support of campaign donors through calls, dinners, plaques, meetings, honors and special communications. There was no specific question related to this concept and therefore, no specific data to share. However, several parishioners commented about unmet promises that memorial plaques would be made in return for donations during the church building campaign. There also were stated concerns that parishioners were worried that the Parish might be split again as it was after the church building campaign.

These two matters can be resolved well through effective campaign strategies. Going forward, stewardship should be sincere, consistent and almost contractual to build long-lasting relationships that benefit all in the SFC family.

What needs are seen as being met by the building complex and the campaign? Are these needs immediate, future-focused or both?

There was general agreement about the need for new spaces. In addition to those space needs addressed in the space needs committee report and in the architect plans, there were many other needs listed by those surveyed. These comments are summarized from **FQ#4** answers and include only newer concepts about which people felt strongly. Many the comments below, such as those recommending a new rectory, were made numerous times. These comments fall into several, underlined categories:

Space needs

- Need to do better job of scheduling space usage, not just adding spaces
- Refurbish rectory, need nicer accommodations for priests – little privacy
- Social spaces are most needed for a bigger sense of community
- (Regarding the rectory and education building) the staff is without space to work- it is stressful for those involved- there is no storage-laundry space
- Need better office spaces for priests in the rectory,
- demolish existing rectory build new one adjacent to Oldenski
- Congestion at Recreation Center - move Oldenski wall for full gym
- social hall for wedding receptions
- Inadequate technology for CCD – lack of ability to advance tech – need to use media to get the word out about the faith – We lose kids after 8th grad due to physical plant needs and lack of media contact.
- Too much focus on paying off mortgages to the detriment of program advancement and physical plant – it is dirty and dingy
- Plans may be too large and may need to be scaled back, doesn't know what studies have been done on needs and community growth
- Space for worship and fellowship (*is inadequate*)
- Need multi-purpose dining room valued (by community) for Rotary Club and other spaces (for community meetings)
- Wider parking spaces for handicapped and elderly (near) side entrances to church
- Recessed lighting in Oldenski ceiling (if it is to be a full gym)

Spiritual needs

- Provide help with parishioners personal and spiritual needs since they are so busy
- Spiritually to reach the 60% who don't attend Mass
- Time spent together (as a parish) beyond the hour of mass,
- New spaces are needed for family togetherness too

- We're not nearly as focused on spiritual needs as protestant churches – need a quest for community beyond Mass
- Young adults – we should capture their attention and enthusiasm while young

Program needs

- Keep offering programs we have – more participation
- Need (more Parish) social gatherings, (we have) only the fish fry, festival, ethnic food festival to bring us together-generational gaps exist
- Parishioners services – need more volunteers from the laity to serve
- More needs to be done for our aging parishioners
- (Expand) small faith programs
- New opportunities for new tranferees
- Not enough outreach Staff
- Share adults and youth ministries with other churches

Affect and Emotional needs

- More welcoming procedures
- Visit with people to evangelize
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Other needs

- Physical plan for the parish
- Talent profile (of parish members)
- (A list of campaign) commitment opportunities
- (We should) model (the Cranberry community's) growth and development

The above list is a wish list, in the consultant's opinion, since it received no scrutiny of its worthiness as part of the SFC building plan. Similarly, some of those surveyed described the present building plan as a wish list or laundry list. The problem with a plan being described as a wish list is that it will be perceived as being established without analysis, a list that will superficially address Parish needs. Such a list will not garner general support.

This point is raised because it is essential that all building plan rooms be considered and described for their present and future impact, for multi-faceted uses, for esthetic value, and for ways that these spaces enhance our faith, families and fellowship. At this point, descriptions of these spaces have been utilitarian, at best. To be successful in building these spaces, their descriptions and uses should inspire and compel potential supporters to be donors.

Are those surveyed interested in the entire project or just a few aspects of the project?

Generally, those surveyed spoke about CCD classrooms and office spaces. Very few spoke holistically about the project. One interviewee corrected the interviewer for using the collective term, "Family Life Center" that existed in the architectural drawing for the project. Renovations and additions were not seen by that individual either as a center or as a site focused on Family Life. An irony is that St. Thomas More just finished building a similar structure called a Family Life Center (with similar spaces - classrooms, gym, a gathering/ dining space, a new kitchen, small meeting rooms and some garden space). A FLC label was not questioned at STM because it functions as a Center for Family Life. How will the SFC additions and renovations function?

What fundraising processes were used in previous campaigns?

This was not a specific question in the interview since SFC had not conducted a full campaign before. Parishioners provided data at different points in the interviews regarding this concept and in answer to other questions. They recommended:

- Traditional fundraising events like dinners, raffles, auctions etc
- Direct requests to parishioners for gifts but many opposed asking for a specific pledge amount
- Large gifts from rich donors but few people knew of well-to-do parishioners

- Mortgages as a popular stratagem based on past SFC experience
- campaign strategies would need to come from the campaign fundraiser

Most parishioners had not participated in a capital campaign. Those who had done so mainly were involved as donors. It will be a challenge to establish the discipline and drive for a three-year campaign.

What is the perception of parishioners regarding the plans of the Parish leadership?

Leadership was seen as accepting whatever was proposed by groups of parishioners. One stated, "Initiatives are not Parish led." Another noted that Father Gallagher can get whatever he wants if he just asks for it.

It appears that the Parish is waiting for Father Gallagher to weigh in on this project.

What lessons can be learned from previous campaigns that were conducted?

- The Parish does not tap its Parishioners for help often, but they have a reputation for responding to emergency requests if asked to do so.
- The Parish is eager to pay its debt quickly; a parishioner mentioned that this priority may be at the cost of hurting programmatic growth.
- The traditional fundraising procedures of a long campaign have not been followed.
- The \$10M goal of this campaign is about 4 times the size of previous efforts.
- Most parishioners have not sacrificed, as individuals, for the benefit of past campaigns.

It will take concerted efforts by many parish volunteers and staff to advocate for this campaign with compelling reasons for the whole Parish getting involved. It will take all of us for this campaign to succeed. The nature of involvement is not a gift on a particular Sunday; rather it will be a three-year commitment.

How should SFC history affect the strategies and decisions of this campaign?

- Past campaigns were very limited in scope and results with mortgages providing the majority of needed funds.
- Campaigns to build the church and to buy the abutment do not educate us much about an extended, large, parish-wide campaign.

This campaign is precedent-setting for SFC as to establishing a long-term goal that necessitates significant involvement by the whole Parish.

Do those surveyed consider the campaign a high enough priority to sacrifice their time, talent and treasure for the duration of the campaign, construction and post-campaign transitions?

This is the most important question to extrapolate correctly. Those in the interviews were almost unanimous in their willingness to contribute financially and as volunteers. The feasibility committee, building committee and the development committee are enthusiastic and ready to begin. It is the opinion of this consultant that there need to be regular, exciting consistent messages shared with the parish for that level of support to result. Three to five years is a long commitment that will not come from a single pep talk. Nevertheless, it can be done.

Are patterns of support and advocacy evident that are likely to exist throughout the Parish?

The findings from the survey are likely to extend to the Parish as a whole.

Are those surveyed able to explain the new project's results in clear and compelling terms?

Unfortunately, no... The phrase "needed spaces" was said often, but only the potential users of these spaces were able to explain the significance of spaces, mainly the ones that their ministry or group would use.

What terms are used repeatedly enough to frame the marketing and branding of a campaign?

- Space needs
- Generous parish
- Welcoming parish
- Parish is like a family
- Parish is supportive to transferees
- Parish is faith-filled
- Pastor is a superb homilist
- It feels like a small parish
- There is something there that feels like home.

These phrases would work well in campaign literature since they address the emotional impact of the church on their faith, especially with so many people being first generation transferees to the area. The impact of SFC is so strong that most do not intend to leave the area.

Do people support the project simply because others in leadership roles say that it is needed? Is their support superficial or substantive?

At the moment, the statements of support are positive but superficial except for those people with a vested interest in a particular space or spaces that would be renovated or built. Interviewees commented often that there is a need for additional support from the Pastor for this campaign if it is to succeed.

Credentials of Feasibility Study Consultant (See Attachment #4)

Recommendations Section

There is a separate segment of this report containing the recommendations of the consultant. It is formatted as a power point presentation with a handout for those in attendance. That presentation preceded distribution of this report and was followed by a question and answer session.