

Feasibility Study Survey Questions



St. Mary of the Woods School
&
Trinity High School

1. Many of us are not sure “if this is the right plan” going forward. The idea of building a new school is compelling enough. But the cost of building a new school gives pause to many of us. Can we afford to do this? It feels as if what is needed is beyond our financial reach. Maybe we should do this in stages or phases, starting first with the building of a new St. Mary and then Trinity High later.

Response: The total final cost of the project has not been determined yet. After plans are finalized and contractor’s bids have been received, we will assess the cost of the project and determine if/how the construction phases will be completed based on Capital Campaign pledges. The diocese requires that a minimum of 60% of the project cost is pledged and at least 40% of the funds collected prior to beginning construction. An estimate and building plan has been obtained for a school facility that meets all of our current needs, anticipates an increase in enrollment, and complies with all state regulations. Having this plan is important to give us an idea of what we could do and what the cost could be. Undertaking the feasibility study then helps determine the extent of our financial ability, so that we have a better understanding of what is within our financial reach. It also helps us plan for a capital campaign in which we are able to obtain more definite figures and make decisions.

2. Does the potential cost to build a new school (\$12M) include furnishings, desk, computers, and equipment or will those items need to be funded in some other fashion? What existing items, such as desks, will just be moved to the new building once it’s constructed?

Response: We are going to utilize all existing equipment that we can as we have kept interior furnishings updated. The \$12 million figure will cover the building only and items inside that are attached (fixtures) such as, water fountains, toilets, sinks, lighting, etc. This will not cover office and classroom furnishings but once again, we will utilize all we can if it is still in good shape. We are in the process of obtaining an estimate for the cost to purchase all new furnishings. This estimate has been requested from the same company who created the building plan, as that company has knowledge of average costs associated with recently constructed school buildings in this area.

3. What will be the cost associated with maintaining new buildings and facilities? Daily costs? Staff costs? Supplies? Has someone projected the costs associated with maintaining a growing school? And what will happen to the blue gym? Will it be kept and re-purposed or torn down?

Response: In time, since the new school will include an auxiliary gym, the old gym will need to come down. The old gym, like all old buildings, needs much maintenance yearly. The floor is buckling, the lighting is insufficient, the lack of air conditioning makes the building unusable based on current KHSAA laws for several months out of the year. Originally, the old gym was scheduled to come down when the Horn Center was built. However, it was determined that as long as it was financially feasible to do so, having an extra playing court was a benefit to the schools. Again, if an auxiliary gym can be included in the new school construction, it will cover

the need for the additional playing court that can be utilized year round with less overall maintenance.

As far as the daily costs of the new school, in general, new facilities are more cost effective, particularly due to the way things are built now, as opposed to an older building. For example, there is no comparison with regard to the maintenance cost of the Horn Center as compared with the maintenance of our schools. Older buildings require more maintenance.

We assess every year how many teachers are needed to educate the number of children who want a Catholic education. The costs needed to maintain our school is assessed each year as well. The school budgets for all needs including supplies. That process will stay the same with the new school building and anticipated increase in enrollment.

4. Will tuition have to go up to help pay for the new school facilities? And, for those of us who are parents of students in one of our schools, will we be expected to make tuition payments, support the parish offertory, and make a pledge on top of this to help build the school?

Response: In the past six years, tuition hasn't covered either school's operating expenses. Many private schools do not do any fundraising and they do charge what it truly costs to educate a child in the school. If we were to charge what it truly costs, tuition would be over \$9,000 for each student. We at St. Mary and Trinity do a preliminary budget each year and increase annually. We do fundraise to offset what it truly costs and plan to continue to fundraise as we have over the years. The parish also gives a subsidy to Trinity High School and covers half of the operating budget at St. Mary of the Woods School each and every year. The capital campaign for the new school is a separate account than the parish and school accounts. The campaign is beyond these accounts and is by invitation. If families are capable of giving above and beyond offertory and tuition, it will be appreciated but not required.

5. Are we sure we have exhausted every possible scenario for expanding and renovating current school facilities to accommodate growth and expansion of both St. Mary and Trinity? Have structural engineers, for example, said it would be more costly to keep and renovate existing facilities and add additional rooms than to rebuild all new facilities for the school?

Response: We are in the process of working with structural engineers from Axiom Engineering to determine what, if anything, could be done in terms of possibly adding on to the existing structures. We have had preliminary discussions with our local planning and zoning and building codes office concerning the possibility as well. Preliminary findings show that there are several barriers to expanding current school facilities, including: lack of space on the existing site to accommodate changes in required egress/ingress that come with adding onto the buildings; potential asbestos remediation issues; building code issues that arise due to the original structure being built long before existing building codes. We have learned, for example, that even if the buildings were built with the intention of possibly adding another level at the time of construction, building codes and engineering standards have changed so much over the

last 60 years that it may not be an option under current standards. We will, however, continue to explore these options as part of this process, particularly as finances dictate.

6. Why would we not rebuild the school on the church side of our property and create more parking across the street where the new school will be built? Or why not remove the Rectory and utilize that space and existing space where the school is now and rebuild an entire school? That way, the school is on the same side of the street with our other buildings. We can surely find or build a new rectory somewhere close.

Response: The current Rectory was built in 2003, and is one of the newer buildings on campus. There would be several issues with trying to build where the current school facilities are located now. First, there would be nowhere for children to attend school if current buildings were demolished and reconstruction started in the same place. All of that work could not be completed within the summer months while students are out of school. Second, based on preliminary research, it does not appear that there is sufficient space on the grounds on the same side of the street (Franklin Street) to construct a new school building to meet all the code and other requirements and needs, just as it does not appear there is sufficient space to add on to the existing facilities for the same reasons.

7. If we build a school across the street, doesn't that raise safety issues when the children will need to cross the street for daily Mass? We thought the reason for building the Horn Community Center on the school and church side of the street was to keep our school children from having to cross the street. Besides the safety concerns, doesn't building across the street mean our students will have farther to walk to Mass and this at times when there is inclement weather?

Response: The Horn Community Center was built where it is because there was not enough land on the other side of the street (Franklin Street) at the time. We did not acquire a huge portion of that land across from the school on the other side of Franklin Street until the last few years. As far as safety issues, students have crossed the street to utilize the old gym and the playground for several years. We hope to build an auditorium/auxiliary gym so the only time students will be crossing the street will be to attend Mass. In addition, the new school would have its own off-street access for pickup and drop off of students, which will eliminate students crossing the street during those times. Also, the new school needs to be built on the other side of the street so we can continue to educate students during the building process.

8. Even if we raise \$8M or more in a capital campaign, that is still short of the needed \$12M. How will we raise the additional funds? Will the building project have to be phased? If so, what will be included in each phase going forward? Further, why would we not build the new school in our current parking lot, then tear down the existing school and turn that space into parking?

Response: The proposed site for the new school allows adequate land area for the building, playground and potential expansion needs. This site will offer limited disruption to our students and parishioners during construction. It will offer ample parking at the school and open up additional needed parking for parish functions. The distance from church will be addressed by

planned space for an auditorium/auxiliary gym suitable for Masses and other services during inclement weather. The capital campaign will provide us with financial parameters for the project. One possible option is an extended capital campaign (5 years instead of 3 years). In addition, if the capital campaign falls short of the determined cost of the project within the pledge period, a renewal of pledge commitments would be sought for an additional period, to be determined, as was the case with the Horn Community Center.

9. As a means of controlling future tuition costs, have we considered establishing a “Tuition-Assistance Endowment Fund” that parishioners and families of school students might contribute to in the coming years? In time, wouldn’t this endowment grow large enough to generate yearly income which could then be applied to tuition cost increases, thereby holding the actual tuition costs from having to be increased?

Response: Trinity High School has had an established endowment fund for several years. As the Parish was made aware, the fund reached \$1 million in 2022! After ten years in the making, in 2018, an endowment fund was established and funded for the benefit and perpetuation of St. Mary of the Woods School. Both endowment funds are managed by the same financial adviser with Baird (formerly Hilliard Lyons). You will see the balance of the endowment funds for both schools every week in your weekly bulletin, as it is listed along with other financial matters of the Parish. In general, only a portion of the income earned by the funds each year can be used to perpetuate, support and uphold the education and activities of the schools. While these endowment funds are not planned for or set aside for tuition assistance, there is an established fund that provides tuition assistance each and every year for families that need it. Our Tuition Assistance dollars are made available to those in need through the gracious contributions of our parishioners and donors. We use a third party outside agency, FACTS, to process our applications due to KHSAA standards and to add a layer of financial privacy for families. Not only does FACTS process the application, it assesses the information, and school officials receive a report after they calculate how much tuition assistance a person needs. We know how much is in our restricted tuition assistance fund each year and we have been able to give out 100% of assessed need for many years. Tuition assistance funds are needed every year and utilized every year. The endowment funds continue to reinvest income each year so that future needs of the schools may be met. Meeting the needs of the schools in that way, through the current endowment funds, also help offset the need for tuition increases by providing funds that help cover certain costs and expenses. Please keep in mind, the tuition assistance fund is for those who have a financial need for tuition assistance. It is not meant to simply provide free tuition for all students, regardless of financial need.