

# Making Room at Our Table

May 22, 2011

On Sunday, May 22, architect Murray Mack presented the initial schematics for the proposed expansion of the Church of Saint Joseph. About 100 parishioners were in attendance to see the architect's plans that includes a gathering space, fellowship hall with kitchen, handicap-accessible restrooms and storage. The proposal situates the expansion on the west side of the church, encompassing the space between the current church and the school, with the possibility of a second phase to provide an enclosed walkway between the church and the school.

The "west option" was chosen by the planning and design committee as the one to bring forward to the parish for several reasons. First, it is less expensive than building on the east side. Also, there is a storm sewer main below the lawn behind the rectory, and moving it might involve significant additional cost. Finally, there were structural challenges to building on the east side related to the current parish building that made this a more complicated option.

There were some concerns from those in attendance including the placement of the school playground and the total cost of the addition. The playground is a necessity and its placement will be addressed in the master plan. The architects put the cost at between \$2.3 and \$3.7 million. These costs include up to \$500,000 in maintenance for the school and church that need to happen in the near future. However, we could cover most of these repair costs with bequests and gifts. Our church is free of debt and the feasibility study showed a conservative estimate that we could raise \$1.3 million in a capital campaign. We believe that when you see the plans, you will be energized to help make this expansion a reality for the Church of Saint Joseph.

The design of the proposed expansion is beautiful. It maintains the historic front entrance of the church and is integrated with the school. It is particularly fitting for a church located on the main street in downtown St. Joseph. People at the meeting recognized the potential for these spaces to add to the city center and provide a welcome to young families in our parish, as well as those who attend weddings and funerals. It would also provide a much-needed link between the school and the church.

As we gear up for a capital campaign to make this plan a reality, we hope that your imagination will be sparked as you see the designs. Think about the number of times you have seen people congregating in bad weather out in front of the church—before a wedding, after a funeral, or even after Mass. Think about the young parents who have no place to take a crying child. What incentive do they have to keep coming week after week?

Sitting in the pews looking at the field stone walls of the church, we can call to mind the vision our ancestors had when they brought stones from their fields to build a church of this magnitude in downtown St. Joseph. Let us pick up that vision and carry it with us as we imagine what is possible for the Church of Saint Joseph.

The designs are available for viewing at [www.churchstjoseph.org](http://www.churchstjoseph.org) under the Communications tab.