



THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY OF ST. THOMAS MORE  
PROJECT SUMMARY

The population of the St. Thomas More Community has grown significantly during the past 15 years, from about 1400 households in 1990 to over 2,200 in 2005 and is estimated to continue. With this growth comes a responsibility to provide the facilities that will allow us to fulfill our mission to worship, teach, and to serve.

Our facilities have not kept pace with our needs, and now it is time to address this issue. In 2005 our parish community came together, united with God. We invited the Holy Spirit into our deliberations as we received information, listened to each other, and decided **together** what to do. **All members of the church and school were invited to, participate.** All were given an opportunity to share their ideas and be heard through a survey distributed to all parishioners and school families. Meetings were conducted to present survey findings, listen to the concerns and community feedback, and see conceptual designs/drawings for the proposed project.

As a result of this community input, the Steering Committee of the New Building Project identified the following list of priorities to meet the needs of the community for the next 20 years:

- A Parish Center with a Social Hall, Kitchen, additional Meeting Rooms, Pastoral Care and Administrative offices, Library, a Nursery, and additional Storage space
- Modifications to our existing Sanctuary -- Reconciliation Rooms, New Sacristy, Vesting and Lavatory facilities for our priests, a designated Music Rehearsal Room, a Wedding/Bereavement area, an Art and Environment workroom, and an elevator for the school and Sanctuary
- Expanded parking, improved egress and traffic control
- Replacement of the school art and music trailers with a permanent structure
- A new Parish gymnasium
- Outside facilities, including a Columbarium and a Parish Athletic Field

## OUR COMMUNITY

Not too many years ago Chapel Hill was a far different place from today. Since 1990, the population of Chapel Hill has grown from 37,596 to 52,440, an increase of nearly 40%!

The Catholic population of the Raleigh Diocese has grown to 180,000, more than double the amount in 1990. Catholics now comprise 4.5% of the population in an area where Catholics only accounted for less than 1% two generations ago.

We owe a tremendous debt to founding members of our parish who worked and sacrificed to build our first church. On land donated by W.D. Carmichael, Sr., a Gothic Revival church holding 350 people was dedicated on March 31, 1957. In 1964 an elementary school was added to the parish on other land also donated by the Carmichael's. It opened with 100 students, and by 1986, 340 pupils were enrolled.

This rapid growth required that the parish plan for the future and developed a Master Plan. In 1996, a Master Plan was developed by the STM Catholic Community and approved by the Town of Chapel Hill. The first phase included the building of a new church and expanding the school to grades 6-8. On Pentecost Sunday in 1997, ground was broken for the new and larger church, on ground adjacent to the school. Simultaneously, more classrooms were added to the school. In 2005, there were 450 children in our school. The new church was dedicated on December 12, 1998. Plans to build a gathering space, new church offices, auxiliary space, and a gymnasium that meets middle school standards were put on hold until this first phase was paid for.

However, our area and our parish population exploded. In 1986 there were 2,100 parishioners; by 1990, 2,900; by 1993, 4,000; and now there are more than 6,000. The number of households has grown from 200 in 1957 to over 2,200 in 2005, and is still growing. We now minister to more than 500 registered Hispanic families (1,500 people) and growing rapidly. And like any growing family, we must continue to meet new and different needs of our expanding parish family. We must, and will, provide the facilities that will make it possible to fulfill our mission to worship, to teach and to serve.

The project, as outlined below, is our proposal to deal with the tremendous growth and needs of our community.

### 1) PROPOSED NEW PARISH CENTER FACILITIES

#### Social Hall/largemeeting space 37,049

This will respond to our mission statement desire to "be a welcoming, loving, and reconciling community for all peoples," and fill a long-felt need, never met since the move from the Gimghoul Rd. church. It will be a key component in bringing together different elements of the parish for wedding and funeral receptions, festivals, youth dances, banquets, large classes, meetings, holiday events, Generation of Faith catechetical meetings, and so on. We plan for a large hall that will accommodate 500 seats or 1,000 people standing.

#### Meeting rooms and classrooms

Our surveys indicated the need for flexible meeting rooms to meet ministry needs. These rooms will be used by both church and school for faith formation (religious education for children and youth), continuing education for adults which is evolving and growing, Hispanic ministries and many other ministries. We plan for three large dividable rooms and one smaller room.

#### Pastoral Care and Administrative Offices

Current staff office space is simply inadequate. The existing offices were not designed to function as offices and were not upgraded because they were considered "temporary". Significant modifications to walls, windows, electricity, etc. would be needed in this forty-one year old building. Investment in the current building would require that the building be brought up to Town codes which would be extremely expensive. Moving the offices to the new building will create a presence in the church area each day and would

permit staff and volunteers to collaborate much more closely. These offices, with a more up-to-date modular design, will provide flexibility and efficiency and will be less costly in the long-term. Once the existing building is razed, the space would be utilized for a new parish gymnasium.

### **Library**

The library/media [resource] room will incorporate today's rapidly changing technology. It is necessary for an effective Faith Formation program and for adult enrichment and education. It will be a resource for the entire community as well. Ideally, it will have larger and better access for increased accessibility to the members of the parish.

### **Kitchen**

A kitchen, associated with the social hall, will be provided. This mid-size catering/limited service kitchen will be built with plenty of room for expansion in the future, should the need arise. Additional smaller food serving areas in selected locations will also be provided.

### **Storage**

There is simply not enough storage to meet all the various needs of our community. Storage space is required for equipment, supplies, and items associated with social events in order for the office and 70 ministries to function efficiently.

### **Nursery**

We have many families in our parish who have young children. Their participation in the Sunday liturgy is enhanced when they are free from the responsibility of caring for their children for that brief time. Many have said they would like to take part in other programs that take place at St. Thomas More, but they need a safe place for their young children while they attend. Our present facilities are simply not adequate. Research indicates that, after parking, nursery facilities are rated as the second most important priority for young families who are considering joining a parish. There will be space in the Parish Center for childcare facilities that will be located just a short walk away through an enclosed passageway past the Blessed Sacrament Chapel.

The new nursery will permit expanding services from two Masses on Sunday to four, with expectation of **20-30** children per Mass. The nursery will have a half-bathroom and diaper changing station, and space for storing toys and other materials.

### **Framing the Plaza**

Through this campaign we will be able to develop the plaza as the central outdoor gathering space. The new Parish Center will be connected to the Narthex of the Sanctuary with an enclosed walkway. But this will be more than just a hall or a protected way to get between the two buildings. In a sense it is a continuation of the narthex that completes the design of the central plaza of the parish campus and gives it definition. From the roadway it will present a unified look to our buildings and from the parking area will help define the main entrance to the Parish Center and our present Sanctuary.

## 2) PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS TO OUR EXISTING CHURCH

### Reconciliation Rooms

We are a sacramental people. Our church is in many ways the place where our sacramental life is centered. We are baptized here, and confirmed. We are married and buried. We participate in the great Eucharistic Feast. And we also have our sins forgiven and are reconciled with God. In this project we will provide new sacramental space for two confessionals where we will be cleansed and made whole.

### Music and Liturgy

Music is an integral part of our liturgy. The psalms themselves call on us to "make a joyful noise unto the Lord". And we certainly make music here at St. Thomas More. These ministries include: cantors, instrumentalists and soloists, children's choir, schola cantorum (11:15 choir), handbell choir, and celebration singers (9:15 choir), and a Hispanic choir. A designated rehearsal music room and storage is part of this project. This would [also] free up the Sanctuary for other events (since all rehearsals are currently there), and permit preparation before Mass, allow for dividing and practicing by section, eliminate time-consuming set-up and take-down before every rehearsal, and provide adequate and secure storage of music, instruments, and equipment.

### Wedding/Bereavement Area

There are no private areas near the narthex or Sanctuary. In times of joy and sorrow we often need a space where the participants can gather and prepare for the liturgy. This room will be available for brides and grooms to prepare before the wedding. It is a place for families at a funeral to gather privately if needed, or to receive friends who may wish to console them. Liturgical ministers or participants in special liturgies could assemble here in preparation for processions. While often called a bereavement/wedding area, this space will be valuable for a multiple of uses.

### Lounge, Vesting and Lavatory Facilities for our Priests

The existing vestry is small and ill-suited to handle the needs of any occasion larger than our regular liturgical Mass functions. The room is crowded and does not allow our priests any privacy to accommodate parishioners wishing confidential moments of them, unrestricted dressing and lavatory access, nor personal quiet time between functions. Enlarging this space will provide for all these assets.

### Sacristy

Our working sacristy must be able to allow our volunteer ministers as well as our staff ample room to attend to their important, reverential work. At present, both its size and location are impediments to proper functioning. Consecrated elements must be "carted" from our altar area; storage is minimal and elbow room sparse. Further design hopes for the relocation of this space closer to the altar, as well as its enlargement.

### **Art and Environment Workroom**

The A&E Committee would like to use the current kitchen for its preparation work and storage, after the new multi-purpose building is constructed. Access to running water, sinks, counter work space for arranging decorations, and places for storing materials,

large and small vases, large decorations, ladders, ironing boards and supplies are vitally important for them. The kitchen would suit their needs perfectly.

### **Elevator for School/Sanctuary**

Any physically challenged school children must exit the school in order to move between the two floors. Access is through the narthex of the church and poses a great challenge during inclement weather such as rain, snow and ice. In addition, volunteers must do the same when carrying heavy items on carts/hand trucks to and from the storage facility on the first floor of the upper school.

### **3) PROPOSED PARKING, IMPROVED EGRESS AND TRAFFIC CONTROL**

We simply do not have enough parking spaces available to accommodate 2,200 registered household families. In addition, it takes too long to exit the campus following the Masses. The project will add 150 additional spaces and improve egress and traffic control. Final design plans will require town approval.

### **4) PROPOSED REPLACEMENT OF SCHOOL ART AND MUSIC TRAILERS WITH A PERMANENT STRUCTURE**

Several years ago, STM School acquired trailers as a temporary solution to have space for art and music instruction. The trailers have been with us an estimated 25 years for art and 15 years for music. Both are at the end of their useful life. The art trailer, in particular, is aging to the point of being unmaintainable. It is recommended that the replacement, not repair, of these two trailers be considered a "must-do" for the community in the building project.

### **5) PROPOSED PARISH GYMNASIUM**

A central focus of this campaign is a parish gymnasium. During the study process the need for such a facility came from many different groups. It will enhance family life in and out of the parish. It is necessary to provide a full program for our youth of all ages. But its use is not limited to our children. Adult sports leagues that bring members of the parish together seem to flourish when you have the facilities available. The location of the gymnasium emphasizes that this is a gymnasium for the entire community. It is a separate building – close to the school – close to the youth areas – close to meeting rooms – but not attached to any. It will have full locker facilities, lobby and office. It will serve as a core component for fellowship and athletics among all members of the community, young and old.

### **6) PROPOSED COLUMBARIUM AND ATHLETIC FIELDS**

A **Columbarium** is a peaceful final resting place for those who have been cremated. This would be a Catholic place to inter the ashes of a loved one. The Columbarium would be open to non-Catholic family members and spouses as well.

The **Parish Athletic Field** would be provided to support soccer and baseball for both adults and children. This too, along with the gymnasium, will be utilized by the entire parish community including the school. Bleachers will be provided at each field for spectator viewing. The fields will not be lighted and will be for daylight use only.

**Conformance to Town Design Guidelines**

In 1996, St. Thomas More Church and School received Master Plan approval from the Town of Chapel Hill for a full campus plan along with initial SUP approval to construction Phase 1.

In 1996-97 Phase 1 was constructed consisting primarily of a 1000seat worship building and a middle school, supported by expanded on-site parking and a small play field.

Now in 2006 St. Thomas More Catholic Community comes to obtain Special Use Permit approval for the facilities and improvements that, in the main, were contemplated in the original Master Plan approval. The demolition of certain buildings, and the construction of the primary new facilities: a Parish Life Center, Gymnasium, Chapel and Art/Music Building, are all shown to be built as originally contemplated.

Since 1996, new needs for an expanded playfield, better access, expanded on-site parking, and other support facilities, especially a caring and sharing center, have been added to the original Master Plan layout because of needs that have been identified as the St. Thomas More Community has lived into its campus on Carmichael Street.

The St. Thomas More Catholic Community believes that the conceptual plans presented faithfully comply with their currently approved Master Plan and also respond thoughtfully and with good Stewardship to the needs and improvements that have become necessary as the Church and school have lived into their facilities and access.

St. Thomas More Church and School believe these plans meet the letter and spirit of Town Design standards and guidelines, are respectful to their neighbors and faithfully follow the Master Plan for their campus.