

Preface

Guidance in Giving expresses its sincere gratitude to the staff and parish leaders of **St. Mary on the Hill Catholic Parish** for their invaluable assistance throughout the Feasibility Study process. In particular, we thank **Fr. Mark Ross, Martha Kearns**, and the parish staff for their continued support and collaboration.

We also extend our appreciation to the many parishioners who contributed their time, insight, and candid feedback—whether through personal interviews or by completing the study survey. Their openness, sincerity, and investment in the parish’s future clearly demonstrate a strong commitment to the growth and vitality of the St. Mary on the Hill faith community.

This report would not have been possible without the thoughtful and gracious participation of so many members of the parish. We are truly grateful.

Introduction

St. Mary on the Hill Catholic Parish retained **Guidance in Giving** to conduct a **Feasibility Study** to evaluate parishioner sentiment and assess potential support for proposed improvements to the parish campus. These include a new **Parish Life Center**, Increased **Meeting Spaces**, improved **Mothers Day out** and **Senior Center** facilities and an **expanded Parish Hall**.

The Feasibility Study was conducted between **April and June 2025**, led by **Michael Goodwin** of Guidance in Giving. Mr. Goodwin oversaw the daily operations of the study, conducted all personal interviews, and managed the collection and analysis of data culminating in this final report.

Objectives Of the Feasibility Study

The primary objectives of the study were to:

- Educate parishioners about the current status and vision behind the two proposed options for future parish growth;
 - Assess the overall willingness of parishioners to support the proposed expansion;
 - Evaluate the financial capacity and readiness of the parish for a capital campaign;
 - Identify **Leadership Gift (LG) Prospects** within the parish and surrounding community;
 - Identify potential **campaign volunteers**, including prospective committee members and chairpersons;
 - Surface any underlying concerns, misinformation, or areas of conflict that may influence the campaign.
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Feasibility Study Preparation

In collaboration with parish leadership, Guidance in Giving completed the following preparatory steps:

- Developed **Interview and Survey Questions**;
 - Drafted **invitation letters** for both personal interviews and survey distribution;
 - Identified **107 households** to be invited for personal interviews;
 - Selected **2,000+ registered households** to receive the Study Survey;
 - Created a secure **online version of the survey**;
 - Prepared a **Project Plan Summary**, utilizing input from the parish and architectural team to provide parishioners with a clear and concise overview of the proposed projects.
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Feasibility Study Methodology

Two methods were employed to gather feedback during the Feasibility Study:

1. Personal Interviews

A formal invitation was extended to **107 households**, selected to represent a broad cross-section of parish life—top donors, ministry leaders, active volunteers, and regular Mass attendees. Families were asked to schedule a confidential interview with the study consultant. A total of **51 interviews** were conducted, comprising responses from **79 individuals**. Each participant's insights were carefully recorded and tabulated.

2. Direct-Mail and Online Survey

A **Study Survey** was distributed via email to over **2,000 registered parishioners** and also promoted through the weekly parish bulletin. Participants were asked to complete the survey by **June 15, 2025**. All responses received by **June 16, 2025**, were included in this report.

- **394 surveys** were submitted online
- **25 surveys** were returned in hard copy
- A total of **419 families** participated via survey

Combined with personal interviews, **470 households**—or approximately **20% of registered families**—participated in the Feasibility Study. This is a strong response, exceeding the typical 15% average response rate observed in similar studies.

Results and Analysis

Each interview and survey began with a series of demographics questions, asking parishioners about their involvement and opinions about St. Mary on the Hill Parish.

1. How long have you been a member of St. Mary on the Hill?

<i>Membership Ranges</i>	<i>Responses</i>
21+ years	55%
16 – 20 years	8%
11 - 15 years	7%
6 - 10 years	10%
0 – 5 years	20%

2. What ministries, programs and/or activities are you involved with?

Of the households who participated in the personal interview portion or completed a survey, they indicated their involvement in a wide array of parish ministries, programs and activities. The responses from Study respondents provided us with an excellent cross-section of the parish.

3. What is your opinion of Option 1 building a new Parish Life Center and Social Hall on McDowell Street?

<i>Rating</i>	<i>Interviews</i>	<i>Survey</i>
Positive	91%	68%
Negative	5%	11%
Unsure	4%	21%

The majority of survey participants affirmed that Option 1 represents a viable and constructive solution to the parish's current space challenges. Respondents broadly acknowledged the clear and urgent need for expanded facilities, and overall sentiment toward the plan was positive. Particular appreciation was expressed for the proposed enhancements to the Senior Center, Youth Ministry area, meeting rooms, social gathering space, and Mothers Day Out program.

However, several significant concerns emerged consistently across responses:

- The continued use of the existing building for parish offices was perceived as a functional and symbolic limitation.
- Concerns were raised regarding the lack of flexibility within Option 1 to accommodate future growth or additional phases of expansion.
- Many respondents felt that Option 1 does not make full use of the parish's available land, thereby missing an opportunity to build more comprehensively for long-term needs.

- A recurring theme was the belief that Option 1, while helpful in the short term, may soon prove insufficient—potentially leading to another building campaign within a relatively short timeframe.

In summary, while Option 1 is generally seen as a legitimate and supportable plan that addresses immediate needs, these concerns suggest that many parishioners view it as a transitional rather than transformational solution. It may be best characterized as a short- to medium-term investment rather than a strategic, future-proof approach.

4. What is your opinion of Option 2, building a new Parish Life Center on McDowell Street and Social Hall on Monte Sano?

<i>Rating</i>	<i>Interviews</i>	<i>Survey</i>
Positive	93%	72%
Negative	5%	9%
Unsure	2%	19%

The majority of survey participants affirmed that Option 2 represents a viable and constructive response to the parish's current space challenges. Parishioners expressed confidence that this plan provides the most effective and strategic utilization of available parish land. Strong support was voiced for the inclusion of modernized parish offices within the proposed Parish Life Center, as well as for the overall flexibility and scalability of the design.

Respondents highlighted the proposed improvements to several key ministry areas, including the Senior Center, Youth Ministry, meeting rooms, social gathering space (Parish Hall), and the Mothers Day Out program. Many personal interviewees especially appreciated the placement of the Parish Hall on the opposite end of the campus, noting that this configuration would provide helpful separation between large-scale events and the daily life of the parish. There was also clear preference expressed for a larger and more versatile Parish Hall facility.

Despite the strong support, several notable concerns were raised:

- The increased overall cost of Option 2 compared to Option 1.
- Questions regarding the necessity and utilization of such a large Parish Hall.
- Anticipated increases in long-term maintenance and operational costs.

In summary, Option 2 is widely viewed as a legitimate and supportable plan that addresses immediate needs while also positioning the parish for future growth. Most respondents consider it not only a practical solution but also a forward-looking, strategic investment in the long-term vitality of St. Mary on the Hill.

5. Which of these two options do you prefer?

<i>Preference</i>	<i>Interviews</i>	<i>Survey</i>
Option 1	10%	34%
Option 2	86%	57%
No Preference	4%	9%

The most consistent theme throughout the study was the parishioners' clear and unified recognition of the urgent need to expand facilities to support all aspects of parish life. Nearly all respondents expressed strong support for undertaking the project—regardless of whether their preferred option was ultimately selected.

Personal interviews demonstrated overwhelming support for Option 2. While the survey data also reflected a preference for Option 2, the margin was somewhat smaller compared to the interviews.

It is important to note that survey respondents did not have the benefit of engaging in discussion about the project, during which Counsel was able to share both affirmations and concerns expressed by fellow parishioners. This dialogue proved influential: numerous interviewees reported arriving at their session favoring Option 1 but, after thoughtful discussion and reflection on broader parish feedback, ultimately shifted their preference to Option 2.

6. Would you be willing to volunteer your time for the campaign? (mailings, phone calls, reception preparation, contacting fellow parishioners, etc.)?

<i>Response</i>	<i>Interviews</i>	<i>Survey</i>
Yes	57%	41%
No	23%	37%
Unsure	10%	23%

A significant number of respondents expressed a willingness to volunteer in support of the campaign. Based on this response, Counsel does not anticipate any difficulty in recruiting the number of volunteers required to effectively implement a successful and well-organized campaign.

7. If asked, would you be willing to commit your talents by taking a leadership position on the Campaign Committee to be formed to facilitate the campaign?

<i>Response</i>	<i>Interviews</i>
Yes	48%
No	20%
Unsure	32%

A strong cross-section of parishioners indicated a willingness to assume leadership roles within the campaign. In addition to those who were interviewed, several respondents also suggested the names of other parishioners who may be well-suited to serve in leadership capacities. This broad base of potential leaders provides a solid foundation for forming an effective and representative campaign committee.

8. Could you estimate what your family contribution might be over a 3-year period?

PLEDGE RANGE: Gift-by-Gift Breakdown

<i>Gift Breakdown</i>	<i>Interview</i>	<i>Survey</i>	<i>Total Number of Gifts</i>	<i>Total Pledges</i>
\$250,000+	2	1	3	\$800,000
\$100,000 – 249,999	5	3	8	\$800,000
\$50,000 - \$99,999	5	2	7	\$370,000
\$25,000 - \$49,999	9	10	19	\$535,000
\$20,000 - \$24,999	1	1	2	\$40,000
\$15,000 - \$19,999	5	8	13	\$195,000
\$10,000 - \$14,999	8	19	27	\$272,000
\$7,500 - \$9,999	2	6	8	\$64,000
\$5,000 – \$7,499	2	101	103	\$528,000
\$4,000 - \$4,999	1	3	3	\$16,000
\$3,000 - \$3,999	0	14	14	\$46,000
\$1 - \$2,000	0	19	19	\$26,500
TOTALS	40	187	226	\$3,692,500

Based on Counsel's experience, it is typical for individuals to indicate a pledge amount during the study phase that is ultimately lower than the amount they contribute once the campaign is underway. The responses received thus far offer strong encouragement regarding the parish's capacity to raise a significant amount of funds.

It is important to note that the pledge estimates reflected in the study were provided by only a small subset of parishioners, which is standard for this stage of the process. Counsel anticipates that the final campaign will receive approximately 800 to 900 individual gifts.

Another important consideration is the pledge period. Parishioners were asked to consider a three-year commitment; however, Counsel recommends extending this period to four years. This extension is projected to increase total pledges by approximately 15% to 20%.

9. Is it reasonable to ask the "average parishioner" to consider pledging \$125 or more per month, payable over 36 months?

<i>Response</i>	<i>Interviews</i>	<i>Survey</i>
Yes	75%	43%
No	12%	16%
Unsure	13%	41%

Based on the results of the study, Counsel's experience in similar campaigns, and an analysis of current offertory giving patterns, Counsel recommends that a total pledge in the range of \$6,000 to \$8,000—payable over a four-year period—be presented as a realistic and appropriate ask for the average parishioner. It is understood that some parishioners will be in a position to give more, while others may give less. However, this suggested range reflects a balanced and achievable goal for the broader donor base.

10. Is there anything in the local or parish community that you believe would hinder the success of the proposed project?

<i>Response</i>	<i>Interviews</i>	<i>Survey</i>
Yes	17%	11%
No	65%	59%
Unsure	18%	30%

Few respondents identified any significant obstacles to a successful fundraising effort. However, several potential concerns were noted, including:

- General economic uncertainty
- The ongoing capital campaign at Aquinas High School
- The impact of the stewardship tuition model utilized by some parish families
- Local and municipal regulations that could affect planning or construction

These concerns, while valid, were mentioned infrequently and do not appear to pose a substantial threat to the success of a parish-wide campaign.

11. If the campaign proceeds as proposed, will you support Fr. Ross and the parish leadership to the best of your ability to help ensure that the campaign is successful?

<i>Response</i>	<i>Interviews</i>	<i>Survey</i>
Yes	100%	95%
No	0%	2%
Unsure	0%	3%

This represents the strongest positive response Counsel has observed in many years. It reflects the deep trust and appreciation the parish community has for Fr. Ross and his leadership. Moreover, it underscores the overwhelming support among parishioners for proceeding with a capital campaign.

12. Are there any other topics or advice you would like to mention that have not been addressed during this interview?

Recommendations

There is a clear understanding among parishioners that St. Mary on the Hill must not only address its current challenges but also plan prudently for the future. For the past 20 to 25 years, the parish has experienced significant space limitations. These constraints have compromised the parish's ability to minister effectively, foster meaningful community gatherings, and provide comprehensive faith formation across all age groups.

As a result, many ministries and meetings have been displaced to parishioners' homes or offsite locations. The existing parish hall is insufficient for large events, which often forces use of school facilities—disrupting daily school operations. The study confirms that the overwhelming majority of parishioners support expanding parish facilities. However, the precise scope and nature of that expansion should be determined by parish leadership through a careful and consultative process.

The parish is ready to move forward, and leadership should proceed with confidence and clarity. Given the parameters of the Harvest of Hope campaign and the continued rise in construction and labor costs, this decision must be made with urgency.

Key Factors for Consideration

Based on the findings from *Guidance in Giving* and its national campaign experience, the following key points should inform the parish's decision-making:

- The parish currently has approximately **\$9 million** available for the project, while still maintaining a significant reserve.

- Parishioners **understand the need for expansion** and support addressing these needs without delay.
 - The project will respond to **longstanding needs** previously identified in parish discernment processes.
 - Architectural designs presented were **notional and flexible**, allowing for continued refinement to address concerns.
 - The parish is **landlocked**, and the existing property is the only viable opportunity for growth.
 - Leadership must remain **future-focused**, recognizing the long-term impact of today's decision.
 - Once built, the new facilities and parking will limit future expansion—**except as permitted under Option 2**.
 - Counsel believes that **either option will be well supported**, with comparable fundraising outcomes anticipated for both.
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Fundraising Projections

- Based on the feasibility study, offertory records, wealth screening, and campaign history, the parish is expected to raise **between \$12 and \$15 million**.
 - **\$7 to \$10 million** from the **top 300 donor families**.
 - Among these, **69 families** have already indicated intent to contribute approximately **\$3 million**.
 - **\$5 to \$6 million** from the **remaining 2,100 families**.
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Preference for Option 2

- **Option 2 received the strongest support** in both personal interviews and survey responses.
 - Interviews were overwhelmingly in favor of Option 2.
 - A clear majority of survey respondents also preferred Option 2.
 - It is important to note that survey participants did not receive a full briefing on each option.
 - Based on experience, Counsel believes that those initially hesitant are likely to support the plan once fully informed. This is supported by responses to **Question #10** of the survey.
 - The **\$3 million cost difference** between the options is minimal within the context of this campaign and should not be a deciding factor.
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Phased Approach to Determining the Final Option

While Counsel believes the necessary support and funding for Option 2 exists, we also recognize that undertaking a campaign of this magnitude may cause concern. As a prudent strategy, parish leadership could allow the results of **Phase 1 (Leadership Gifts)** to serve as the final determinant of which option proceeds.

- **Option 2** should be presented to leadership-level donors as the intended plan, contingent on a **minimum of \$7 million in pledges** during Phase 1.
 - If this threshold is met or exceeded, the parish would proceed with **Phase 2** of the campaign.
 - If not met, the parish could transition to **Option 1** for the remainder of the campaign, with clear and transparent communication to leadership donors. While some donors may reduce their pledges, Counsel believes this impact would be negligible for Option 1's success.
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Guidance in Giving Recommendations

- **Select Option 2** as the preferred plan, pending the outcome of Phase 1.
- **Communicate** study results and the rationale for Option 2 to the parish.
- Adopt a **two-phased campaign approach** with a total goal of **\$12 to \$15 million**, and a conditional benchmark for Phase 1.

Phase 1 – Leadership Gifts

- **Timeline:** August 2025 – December 2025
- **Target Group:** Top 300 donors
- **Goal:** \$7 to \$10 million

Phase 2 – Special and General Gifts

- **Timeline:** January 2026 – May 2026
- **Target Group:** 2,100 families
- **Goal:** \$5 to \$6 million

Select a Campaign Leadership Team by mid-August

- Priority should be given to forming the **Leadership Gift Team**.
- Hold initial meeting in **late July to early August**.

Initiate informational (non-solicitation) sessions

- Explain the rationale and benefits of Option 2.
- These sessions can also gather input on final design elements.
- Sessions will run concurrently with Phase 1.

Begin group and individual solicitations starting in late August.

A successful campaign will require ongoing sensitivity, clarity, and transparency. Parish leadership must remain vigilant in articulating priorities, costs, and the stewardship responsibility entrusted to them. Doing so will help establish the foundation of trust critical for both the current Capital Campaign and future development efforts.

Further Leadership Gift Identification and Cultivation

As part of the Leadership Gifts Phase, Guidance in Giving will leverage insights from the Feasibility Study, parish offertory records, wealth screening, and past campaign results to:

- **Identify and quantify Leadership Gift prospects**
- **Collaborate with Fr. Mark Ross and the Campaign Committee**
- **Develop individualized solicitation plans**

This phase will focus on **approximately 300 households**. A dedicated **Leadership Gifts Team** will be essential to success. In addition to Fr. Mark, this team should include **ten respected parishioners or couples**, forming a subcommittee of the larger campaign team (see next section).

This team will be responsible for cultivating and soliciting gifts of **\$25,000 or more**, using a variety of personal and strategic outreach methods during the early stages of the campaign.

Lay Campaign Committee

Guidance in Giving emphasizes the importance of lay leadership in Catholic campaigns and parish life. Creating a sense of ownership among parishioners is essential to project success. From the beginning, parishioners must see themselves reflected in the leadership and purpose of the campaign.

Lay leaders are well-positioned to speak personally about:

- Why this project matters to them
- How it will benefit their families and the broader parish community
- Why they are involved in bringing the vision to reality

Guidance in Giving will provide a full **Campaign Committee Flowchart** with roles, responsibilities, and structure. Fr. Mark and parish leadership will be assisted in selecting committee members who represent a broad cross-section of parish life.

A particular emphasis should be placed on **recruiting younger parishioners**. An effective strategy would be to **pair younger couples with seasoned leaders** in each major role, fostering intergenerational collaboration.

Promotion of Study Findings

- Distribute the **Feasibility Study Findings Report** to the Finance Council and other groups at Fr. Mark's discretion.
- Publish an **Executive Summary** for the entire parish.
 - Fr. Mark is encouraged to **present the summary at all Masses**.
 - The summary should be **posted on the parish website and emailed** to all families.

Conclusion

Guidance in Giving finds strong support, enthusiasm, and financial potential for a successful capital campaign at St. Mary on the Hill. Achieving that success will require:

- A united and collaborative effort
- Clear and consistent communication
- Comprehensive campaign planning and execution
- A spirit of generosity and Christian stewardship

We are honored to have conducted this Feasibility Study and are grateful for the openness and engagement of the parish community. We look forward to the opportunity to serve as counsel and to walk alongside you in bringing this vision to life.