

St. Elizabeth Catholic Church
Feasibility Study
Executive Summary

In November of 2021, Praxis Nonprofit Strategies conducted a feasibility study for St. Elizabeth. The purpose of the study was to test support for a \$3.1 million capital campaign to create a new or renovated Parish Ministry Center (PMC) and establish a Rectory. A total of 221 individuals participated in the study – 26 interviewees, 16 focus group participants, and 179 anonymous survey respondents. Below is a summary of the findings.

A more detailed list of findings, along with the complete set of quantitative and qualitative data, are included in the full feasibility study report.

Strong Satisfaction with the Parish Mission, Faith-life, and Community

1. Respondents feel overwhelmingly positive about St. Elizabeth, its mission, the faith-life of the parish, and the community.
2. Nearly 95% of the parishioners believe St. Elizabeth effectively lives out its mission.
3. Roughly 90% think the parish provides them opportunities to grow in their faith and offers them avenues to build community and fellowship.
4. Generally parishioners approve of the parish's Covid mitigation efforts, but yearn for parish-life post-Covid.
5. Parishioners cite several areas that limited the church, including: lack of adequate funds; more parish programming; inadequate space; the Covid pandemic; true understanding of stewardship; more outreach to recruit and support students; and disconnect between school and parish.

Confidence in Organizational Leadership

6. Levels of confidence in the parish's leadership are very high, particularly with Fr. Greg Haskamp. Lay leaders also earn the praise of parishioners.
7. Roughly 95% of respondents believe the pastor, parish staff, and lay leaders make wise decisions for the parish.
8. As a whole, parishioners acknowledge the dedication and hard work of staff. Some acknowledged that parish staff likely are overworked and have too many responsibilities. Some suggested that the parish may have unrealistic expectations of staff, asking them to perform duties outside of the scope of their official job or professional training. Some wished the staff were more responsive.
9. Nearly 90% consider the parish effective at managing finances but expressed a desire to see increased tithing, more stewardship education, and more financial transparency.

Widely Supported Projects with a Strong Desire for Clarity, Cost Containment, and Transparency

10. Parishioners recognize the need and utility of a PMC and Rectory.
11. Over 90% generally support the creation of a new or renovated PMC.
12. Roughly 85% support establishing a parish Rectory.
13. Of course, parishioner support came with abundantly clear requests for the parish to do its homework prior to any fundraising. Parishioners want to understand: building utilization plans; look and location of buildings; cost of the PMC; how to dramatically reduce the cost estimated for the Rectory; how these projects connect to other campus needs; what decision-making bodies will oversee the projects and the campaign; and how the parish intends to finance these projects and handle their ongoing maintenance.

Willingness to Support a New Campaign with a Nod to Generalized Uncertainty and Donor Fatigue

14. Despite the ongoing pandemic and the recent end of the parish's last capital campaign, parishioners are rather unambiguous: they will support a campaign for a PMC and Rectory.
15. Roughly 80% of respondents indicate they would offer financial support.
16. Another 17% are not yet sure if they could support a campaign.
17. Of those who indicated their willingness to support a campaign, 93 shared what level of giving they might offer. These potential gifts total roughly \$2,448,000 to \$3,034,000.
18. Further, nearly 70 people indicated a willingness to volunteer for a fundraising campaign and participants suggested more than 100 parish leaders who could potentially lead a campaign.

Commitment to Establish a PMC and Rectory but a Clear Preference to Take the Needed Time to Recover from the Pandemic, Boost Parish Participation and Giving, and Research the Right Plan.

19. Only 70% of respondents consider it important for St. Elizabeth to conduct a campaign in the next 12 months.
20. External factors behind this reticence revolve primarily around a desire to see the Covid pandemic and the ensuing economic turbulence subside before fundraising.
21. Internal factors behind the reticence include a desire for St. Elizabeth to: reengage parishioners in Mass attendance and participation in the communal life of the parish; spend time and energy to improve parish tithing and stewardship; and take a brief pause between the end of the last capital campaign and the beginning of a new campaign.

Assessed Level of Fundraising Potential

Based on study responses, membership numbers, current unrestricted giving, and previous capital campaigns, Praxis believes without reservations that St. Elizabeth could raise the \$3.1 million needed to complete a Parish Ministry Center and Rectory. Already, the parish has secured a pledge of \$600,000 to cover the costs of a new Rectory. A well organized campaign could certainly raise the remaining \$2.5 million. Should the parish wish to expand the scope of the campaign to include additional campus needs that have wide support among parishioner, Praxis believes that it is within the reach of the parish to raise roughly \$4-4.5 million.

Recommendations

Praxis believes a capital campaign to fund a PMC and Rectory for St. Elizabeth's campus is feasible. That said, Praxis believes fundraising at St. Elizabeth would benefit from careful internal preparations and systematic planning prior to any public cultivation or solicitation. With deliberate leadership and focused attention on preparations and planning, Praxis believes the parish could possibly launch a campaign in the third or fourth quarter of 2022.

1. Celebrate the formal end of the *Building Our Legacy* campaign and the work that was accomplished, communicate the results of the feasibility study, and clarify the next steps St. Elizabeth will take to prepare for a campaign to support a PMC and Rectory.
2. Establish a solid foundation for the campaign through careful internal preparations and systematic planning prior to any fundraising cultivation or solicitation.
3. Establish clear staffing responsibilities and support to organize and manage a capital campaign.
4. Begin active planning to launch a campaign that includes an Organizational Phase, Cultivation and Education Phase, Commitment Phase, and Follow-Up Phase.
5. Recruit respected leaders to spearhead the capital campaign and its committees and engage a broad group of volunteers to serve on those campaign committees.
6. Develop a leadership giving component of the fundraising campaign that includes opportunities to cultivate donors, direct interaction with the pastor, varied giving vehicles, and personalized solicitations.
7. Establish prayer and stewardship as the cornerstones of a campaign.
8. Provide parishioners multiple opportunities to learn more about the motivations of the campaign and the specific plans.
9. Seek three-year financial pledges to support the campaign above and beyond parishioners' annual giving.
10. Finalize a campaign goal based on historic giving patterns, projected giving from lead donors, the scope of the project plans, and this study's "Overview of Parish Stewardship and Fundraising."
11. Consider inviting donors to entertain additional giving beyond gifts solely dedicated to the capital campaign.