

July 20, 2019

Dear St. Mary's Parishioners

As we get ready for some major renovation projects I wanted to review the overall plan for the campus and why we are moving in this direction. I'm hoping that by keeping you informed you can become collaborators in the process and help make this a reality.

When I arrived, my predecessors, through your generosity, had been able to put away \$1.3 million for future building renovations, particularly the parish hall. When I arrived the direction that had been presented was a renovation of the current hall with an estimated cost of \$4 million. Initially, I was in favor of the plan. I thought that the old hall had character, I was afraid that a new hall might not have the same flavor. At that point I wasn't too concerned because we didn't have the money anyways.

As time progressed we explored the possibility of simplifying the renovation project and doing it in phases. The thought was that we could first renovate the basement and stop the flooding, then work on the top floor. The plan would cost us \$1.5 million just to repair the basement and stop the flooding and another \$2 million to renovate the upper hall.

At the same time we discovered that the O'Reilly building had lead paint flaking off the walls. The whole building was desperately in need of renovation and I was appalled that the RE building was in such disrepair. I could not imagine anybody being inspired to send their children and therefore I could not wait until the parish hall was completed before I spent money on the O'Reilly building. Raising the money and renovating the parish hall could take years, and our parish may not be here in the next few years if we don't minister to the youth and young families. So I chose to move on repairs at once, with completion estimated by this September at a cost of about \$400,000.

This necessary decision meant that we really didn't have the funds to even start a first phase of renovation on the hall. This pause made me take a serious look at how we were using our buildings. Our current RE attendance barely fills the O'Reilly. That building is only used once a week during the school year by RE at less than full capacity. This led me to realize that we had no need for the class rooms in the basement of the old parish hall. We would be spending \$1.5 million on space that would not be utilized.

Renovating the old hall would mean repairing the flooding in the basement (and there were no guarantees that we could) in order to renovate basement classrooms that we have no need for. It would also mean making it handicap accessible which would include an expensive elevator. There was also the possibility that, as we discovered more things that needed to be repaired, the price of the project would keep going up (as it did when we renovated the O'Reilly building).

Another reality that determined our decision making was the annual cost of the buildings on our campus. We have to pay insurance on every building on our campus based on square footage (not usage!) Last year we spent over \$35,000 on insurance. We are paying for buildings even if we don't use them. Combined with utility costs, we spent over \$20,000 on the hall and the Pre-K buildings, two buildings that we never used last year. Between the Ave Maria Building, the storage building, the Parish Hall, and the Pre-K building we spent almost \$30,000. Just the O'Reilly building costs \$10,500, a structure we only use once a week for RE. The Ave Maria building is only used about 7 times a week. We have too many buildings for our needs. Buildings not in use should be torn down in order to better utilize the buildings we do use. It is hoped that we will be able to make better use of the renovated O'Reilly building.

It is in light of these realities we opted to pull down the hall and pre-k building and build a completely new hall. This hall will not need elevators, will have far greater square footage for a wider range of activities, and will not have the maintenance fees or utility costs of an old building. We are looking at an estimated cost of \$3 million or more. Once the hall has been completed we will bring down the Ave Maria building. Here is a preliminary picture of our future campus.



One of thing you will notice about this design is that it requires the demolition of the storage building. This was a hard decision to make because we realized that it was a really new building in good shape. However we chose this option because:

1. We could not put the new hall over the old hall because the trees and the utility right-of-way limited the size of the building we could build in that space.
2. Placing the hall in that corner opened the campus and provided more parking.
3. We wanted to keep the field for various uses. Keeping both the storage building and placing the new hall on the field would have meant the loss of our field.
4. The storage building is not being fully utilized. Many of the items in it are no longer needed and yet we pay insurance. We will be looking at more cost effective means for storage.

Therefore the current plan is the following. The O'Reilly building should be done in September and asbestos removal from the old hall will start on July 22. The demolition of the hall, pre-k, and storage building will start when the asbestos has been removed, probably in early September, and will cost us about \$200,000. We will debut the plans for the new hall in August. Once the demolition is complete we will assess where we are financially and probably begin work on parking spaces and renovation work on the church itself, starting with new ADA approved bathrooms. The date for building the new hall will depend on the financial support we receive for this project.

In the end, I hope this summary was helpful. I realize that the changes will be happening rather quickly, which can create a sense of uncertainty. I also realize that some were concerned about why and how your generous gifts were being used. I hope this summary will help assuage some of those fears. Please feel free to reach out to me if you have questions or concerns

In Christ,

Fr. Kurtis Wiedenfeld