



# Building Community





Welcome to our second edition of *Building Community*. Here you will find some updates on the Campus Planning process and discussion of some of the programmatic issues the Steering Committee is addressing, specifically housing advocacy and growth in school enrollment. The planning process will be making some big leaps in the coming year as various studies are completed in the spring. Over the first half of 2016 the Steering Committee will be discerning the fruits of this research in order to map out a schedule for construction, the capital campaign, and design. This is an exciting time. We hope you find this update useful, and that you take advantage of public meetings coming up to voice your own questions, concerns, and excitement.

### **Montrose TIRZ is approved by City Council; Lisa Hunt appointed to Board**

The Houston City Council approved a Montrose Tax Incremental Redevelopment Zone (TIRZ) on December 16, 2015. The motion passed unanimously. Steve Costello, who rolls off the City Council at the end of 2015, will serve as chair. Our rector, Lisa Hunt, was appointed to serve on the board as well.

TIRZs are mechanisms for directing tax dollars for investment in particular geographical areas, freeing up dollars for the

general fund to be spent on infrastructure and other needs.

The Montrose TIRZ is going to assist in paving streets, addressing drainage, building sidewalk, and expanding workforce housing in the neighborhood of the Church

Our leaders at St. Stephen’s Church and School were active in advocating for responsible development in our neighborhood. The TIRZ will be an opportunity for us to collaborate with our community for higher quality of life for all.

### **DiniSpheris to Present Findings and Recommendations January 24 and 25**

Earlier this year, St. Stephen’s Church and School engaged Dini Spheris to conduct a campaign planning study focused around the willingness of our community to support an array of needs ranging from facilities to programming to endowment.

The Vestry and the Board of Trustees will host two opportunities for the community to learn what they discovered. Our team from DiniSpheris will report on Sunday, January 24, at noon in the nave of St. Stephen’s and on Monday, January 25, at 6 p.m. in the nave of the church. Students, parents, parishioners and interested folks are urged to attend one of these sessions.

Nearly 70 individuals participated in the process, representing our church and school constituents plus some private foundations, community neighbors and supporters. These people participated in conversations confidentially, sharing their thoughts and reactions to some of St. Stephen’s long-range planning considerations and their interest in making St. Stephen’s a top philanthropic priority.

We learned that our community appreciates the limitations of our current facilities and that there is a willingness to support new buildings and programs that advance church and school missions. In addition, the door is open for us to forge relationships with foundations to better understand the school’s bricks-and-mortar needs, strategic plan and vision.

Because of the positive feedback, it’s clear we have support for a philanthropic campaign of up to \$8 million. This is tremendously encouraging – a campaign in that range would represent St. Stephen’s most significant fundraising effort in decades. With this information, the Vestry and School Board leaders must jointly prioritize the highest needs based on our vision and business planning. As with any long-range planning initiative, we will develop a phased approach, taking into account multiple funding options for each phase.

Over the next 90 days or so, our focus will be to answer key questions that were raised during the planning study process, develop a phased approach based on prioritization, and put into place the volunteer leadership and systems needed to support a campaign. We will continue to keep our community apprised along the way.

The Vestry and Board of Trustees encourage you to

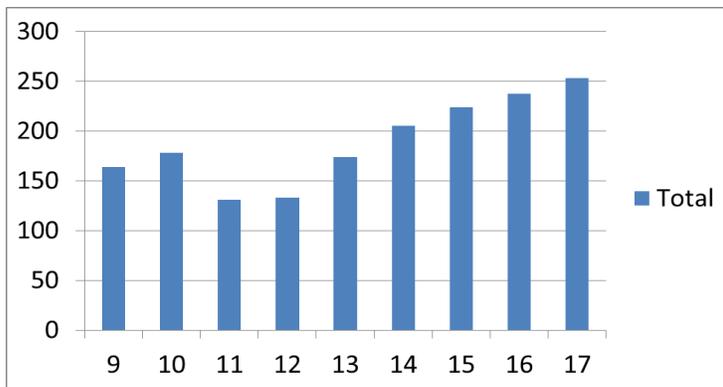
- Share thoughts you may have of others within and even beyond our own community who should know about St. Stephen’s and our future plans
- Start thinking about how you may play a role in St. Stephen’s campaign
- Pray for our leadership – clarity of purpose, judgement and discernment, and the wisdom to listen to the Holy Spirit at work.



## School Enrollment and Facilities Planning

by David Coe

On Saturday, October 24 the St. Stephen’s Episcopal School Board of Trustees held a day long retreat at the Havens Center. Facilitated by Mr. Richard Kellogg, from the Southwestern Association of Episcopal Schools (SAES), Rick led us in a robust discussion about our School, the strategic and financial directions the Board has embarked on, growth projections and the future campus master planning. Later that afternoon, the Church Vestry and the Campus Planning Steering Committee joined the Trustees to speak more about the campus master planning and the Capital Campaign Feasibility Study.



Graph 1

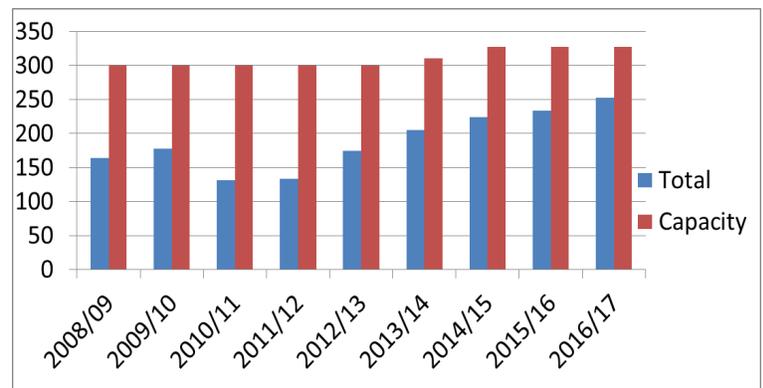
I shared with the Board some of the accomplishments by the faculty and staff over the last four years, the school’s growth since 2009 (see Graph 1) and the challenges the school faces due to aging facilities. Since 2011, the school has almost doubled in size. Without any renovations to the campus’ current buildings, including the apartment building, the school’s capacity is 327 students. Capacity is defined as the number of toddlers and students allowed by either licensing (e.g. Child Protective Services) or Texas Education Standards given the size of the classroom. In Orientation, we are licensed for 44 toddlers; Primary 79 students; Lower Elementary 50; Upper Elementary 50; Middle School 34 and High School 75. Obviously, as the School’s enrollment increases, more and more stress is placed on the campus’ buildings and infrastructure adding to what is already \$1million in deferred maintenance.

For the 2015 - 2016 academic year, St. Stephen’s School registered 237 students, the most in its history. In Orientation, there are 32 toddlers; Primary 72 students; Lower Elementary 43; Upper Elementary 31; Middle School 29 and

High School 34, and because St. Stephen’s has an open enrollment policy, four new students may start in January 2016. Clearly, there is demand for the quality education we offer.

For the 2016 – 2017 academic year, we are projecting a 6.8 percent increase, or an enrollment of 253 students. This will put the School at 77% of capacity (see Graph 2). The increase is based on a goal of 95% student retention, the launching of the new website and focusing the marketing plan on the high school. We are confident in this number. Even though the School can accommodate 253 students, we are already planning for facility changes and/or additions to the campus for the 2017 – 2018 academic year. This includes the addition of a third Lower Elementary class.

As I’ve mentioned before, growth is good, yet it has its challenges. Obviously, increasing enrollments, along with aging and too small facilities, are just a few of the reasons why the capital campaign is so important. We want St. Stephen’s School to be here fifty years from now and offering even better project-based learning experiences. It may be a school without walls or, at least, ones that are permeable allowing for different educational opportunities.



Graph 2

Finally, parallel to the campus master planning is the launching of an Information Technology Strategic Planning process. How we learn and teach 50 years from now will be very different from what we do today. Now is the time to begin laying that new foundation of learning. Faculty, students, parents, community members and administrators will be asked to provide their input to the IT plan. Our goal is to have the plan in place by December 2016. If you are called to participate in this planning I hope you will.



## HR&A Begins Work on Economic Model

St. Stephen's Church has contracted with HR&A to research the highest and best use of St. Stephen's land for long term development. Analyzing data and conducting interviews in the public and for profit sectors, HR&A will examine the potential for a variety of development options on our block.

The Steering Committee and Vestry will use this information to determine the scope of our master plan and potential funding sources for our development. While construction on

the Church and School will be funded initially from internal giving, any housing we will consider is most likely to be created in partnership with other entities whose mission and expertise lies in this area.

The report is due to the Vestry at the end of February 2016 and the Vestry will work with the Board of Trustees to establish priorities on our site.

## Housing Survey by Ann Rosenwinkel

*During the month of October, members of the Church community engaged in a number of conversations about housing in the Montrose area, as well as other neighborhoods where Church members live. Many of these conversations took place in Foyer groups. Two sessions were also held in Pecore Hall. Ann Rosenwinkel, who chairs the housing advocacy subcommittee of the service committee, coordinated this effort. Below is an abridged version of the conclusions from her report on the process and what she found.*

The most discussion, both in terms of amount of time and the intensity, occurred around the importance of St. Stephen's identity. There is a deep connection to the idea of St. Stephen's as the sanctuary or "living room" of Montrose. The problem is that Montrose is rapidly changing into something that we don't fully understand. Wise voices suggest that St. Stephen's remains that sanctuary and thus a sort of curator of the history of the neighborhood. That said, there is a palpable desire to reach out beyond the safety and comfort of our sanctuary and into the greater community.

Some of the anxieties that have arisen from the shifting foundation of Montrose have to do with the disintegration of community and networks of care. Older people are very concerned that they will not be able to age in place and middle aged parents are worried that their children and future grandchildren will not be able to live nearby. As our neighbors change we are feeling uprooted ourselves.

There is a decided lack of clarity about how this understanding of St. Stephen's fits into a mission of Housing Advocacy. The most cogent vision is of an intentional, co-

operative community aligned with our values of inclusivity. Each person seems to have their favorite idea of what group ought to be served. The most consensus is around helping the faculty and staff at the school afford to live right here. There is a sincere concern that the Steering Committee is not being realistic about how hard this might be to accomplish within the financial parameters that have been set (the parish hopes and trusts). The leadership is urged to plan carefully, look at other similar projects, and partner with others to make our vision come to fruition.

When people spoke about what St. Stephen's can do with our property and what they particularly liked about where they lived they spoke about green space, gardens, the sky and the trees. There is a strong sentiment that part of what we offer the city is this open green space. There is an understanding that as Montrose becomes denser parks and yards will be of even more spiritual value.

Part of the conversations included brainstorming activities that the Church can undertake quickly to address some aspects of housing issues in Montrose. A few of these ideas the service committee will be reviewing are:

1. Publishing on church website and in church literature the dates and times of civic association, Harris County and City of Houston meetings
2. Building relationships with organizations that give furniture to refugees and publishing that information for people who may want to donate in that way
3. Consider creating a database of places to rent in the neighborhood
4. Consider sponsoring a refugee family