

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish – Update # 1

September – December 2023

As part of the comprehensive study of building options and a strategic ministry plan, this update provides an informational resource so that all parishioners are made aware of the developments in the planning process. St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish has contracted with Meitler, a Milwaukee-based national Catholic school and parish consulting firm which conducted similar projects in the Diocese of La Crosse to facilitate the study. The complete report from which this update is drawn, Key Findings and Observations Report, can be accessed on the parish website

What Has Been Learned About Community Demographics?

A study of the Holmen area, based on the boundaries determined by creating a polygon from the addresses of over 80% of the parish households, revealed these projections and forecasts for the next five to ten years.

- **Population Growth:** The population is projected and forecasted to increase by 11% or over 4,000 residents over the next 10 years. The percentage of population increase has slowed since a 25.8% increase between 2000 and 2010.
- **Fastest Growing Age Groups:** There are three age groups which will increase in the ten-year period: children 0 to 4, ages 25 to 34, and ages 65 and over. By 2033, nearly one-fourth of all residents will be aged 65 and over.
- **Income, Adult Educational Level:** The average household income in the area is higher than the state average and is projected to increase faster than the state. The area has more “some college” and “associate degree” residents than the state. The area is close to the state averages in “bachelor’s” and “graduate/professional” degrees.
- **Poverty:** There are 203 households or 2.1% of the population who live below the poverty level in the area. The state average is 5.9% and the national average is 11.5%.
- **Catholics in the Area:** About 27.8% of the area population is Catholic or one-in-four. St. Elizabeth Ann Seton registers about 20% or 2,000 of all the self-identifying Catholics in the area.
- **No Religious Involvement:** 59.1% of the area population has no religious involvement in a religious congregation or community. In other words, 3 out of every 5 people do not participate in any religious denomination.

What Has Been Learned About St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish?

For this part of the study, parish data and information on the basic makeup of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish revealed these insights.

- **Membership:** The number of registered households over the five-year period has increased in the past year after declining for the first four. There are 813 registered households or 2,000 people.
- **Sacramental Reception:** Over the five-year period, sacramental receptions have decreased in the parish for every sacrament.
- **Religious Education Enrollments:** Elementary and middle school enrollments have declined but high school enrollments have increased in the past two years.
- **Ratio of Baptisms to Funerals:** Church planners look to this ratio for organic growth in a parish community. The preferred ratio is at least two baptisms for each funeral. The parish ratio is 1 to 1.
- **Slightly Older and Much Wealthier Than the Area:** The average household head age in the area is 50. The parish average age is 51. The average household income in the area is \$104,340. The parish average income is \$134,643
- **Finances and Facilities:** The parish operating finances are sound, and there is money in reserve, investments, and significant real estate holdings. The parish facilities and grounds are well-maintained but current facilities would be described as “minimal” for a parish of its size and inadequate for a full range of ministerial activity.

A parish meeting was held in November to review the findings from the demographic and data studies as well as discuss possibilities for the future. The parish has considered the construction of additional facilities since the parish was established in 1985. The original building was designed to include a new church, multi-purpose/gym, and classrooms for a Catholic School. Other building efforts were proposed in 2002, 2004, and 2008. These latter three efforts were planned for the new site on highway 35. A straw vote by the 56 members who attended the parish meeting can be viewed on the parish website. Parishioners supported these four different options.

1. **Renovate and build at the current parish site and sell any unused property.**
2. **Use the current site and build additional facilities at the new site, selling any unused property.**
3. **Build new facilities at the new site and sell any unused property.**
4. **Purchase new land at a preferred location, build new facilities and sell any unused property.**

A list of ministry possibilities was drawn up from interviews with parish staff and both councils. The full list of possibilities can be viewed on page. 18 of the **Key Findings and Observations Report**. The preferred results based on surveys from those who attended the parish meeting can be viewed on the parish website. Highlights of their preferred options in the five areas of mission are:

- **Worship and Evangelization:** Increase participation in weekend Masses and contact every parishioner and former parishioner to listen to them and invite them to become involved.
- **Faith Formation/Catholic Schools:** Expand programs for all ages, study the need for an early childhood center, and explore the potential for a satellite campus of Aquinas Catholic Schools.
- **Outreach to Those in Need/Homebound Ministry:** Increase activity for the vulnerable and those in need as well as start a Stephen ministry for caregivers and those experiencing a loss.
- **Stewardship and Communications:** Meet with new and old parishioners to invite them to share their time, talent, and treasure with the parish and develop a communications strategy using new and old technology to reach Catholics of all ages and the wider community.
- **Finances and Facilities:** Develop a master site plan, financial resources, and staffing which will support the future growth of the parish.

What Are Parishioners Thinking About Future Parish Ministries?

What Happens Next?

Throughout the study, the consultant is meeting with a Planning Committee, appointed by the pastor, to guide the development of plans for the parish. The Committee is comprised of parish staff and leaders. They will determine a vision for the future, set priorities, and draft a long-range plan. The responsibility to develop the plan rests with the Committee but input from parishioners will be essential in shaping the final draft. Here is what parishioners can expect for their next steps.

- **Parishioner Review of the Draft Plan:** All-parish meeting will be held on January 16, 2024, from 6:00 – 8:00 pm, in the parish gathering area. The first draft of the plan will be reviewed along with the draft of the online survey which will begin later in the month.
- **Parish Survey:** An online survey of parishioners will be conducted from January 26 – February 5, 2024. The survey will be available online and parishioners may submit completed print copies of the survey to the parish office.

- **Parish Updates Like This One:** All information about the study is available on the parish website. Two more updates like this will be available for parishioners to read about the progress of the planning efforts in a summarized fashion.
- **Parishioner Review of the Survey Results and Latest Draft:** A third and final parish meeting will be held on March 19, 2024, from 6:00 – 7:30 pm, in the church. This meeting will review the results from the survey, present the building option preference, and parish leaders will discuss some of the preliminary strategies in various areas of ministry.

Please keep this important study and planning process in your prayer.