Parish Communication re Master Plan for Parish and School Newsletters

Parish Master Plan Update: December

The Context for the Master Plan work: Earlier this year the Parish established a Master Planning Group (MPG) which was formalised by the Parish Pastoral Council in May. The purpose of the MPG is to progress the SMOT Master Plan. Central to this is the ability to fund significant and much needed renovations to our Worshipping place, our Church, and to ensure that we have a continuing future income stream above and beyond our Stewardship Program. We currently do not have the ongoing income to take on major capital works and we have high and ongoing maintenance costs across our Parish properties. This is despite the dedicated efforts of our parishioners giving their time and expertise to maintain our properties on both the east and west side of Silk St.

We want to be able to undertake and complete those major renovations in a holistic way and, concurrently, ensure we have an ongoing income stream due that is so vital for the future of our community to fund pastoral and community work. The focus of that income stream is the options that we have for the development of our assets on the west side of Silk St.

The following update of the work of the MPG on the Master Plan draws on the Report given by Gerard Mullins at the Parish AGM on December 1.

Current Status: The MPG has worked over many months to further develop strong relationships with some key groups who will have a major input to what we can and cannot do, and to what we should and should not do. These include particularly the Archdiocese of Melbourne and the Catholic Development Fund. Representatives from both are regular participants in MPG meetings and are very supportive of the careful and considered approach that the Parish is taking. They are in fact looking to SMOT as an exemplar of how to go about such developments. They have asked the MPG and PPC to ensure we are able to provide them with our ‘template’ for how we are going about this work.

The MPG is also in touch with other parishes who have undertaken development activities and the sort of development partners and expertise they have drawn on to achieve very positive outcomes for their parishes.

While the MPG has a wide and relevant range of skills and experience amongst its members, it became clear that the nature and demands of what is likely to be a multi-year program of large projects requires some additional expertise to prepare more detailed plans, options and business cases. These fuller outlines, costed options and risk management considerations can then be put to our Parish Pastoral Council and the wider SMOT community for consideration.

With support from Fr Michael, the PPC and the Archdiocese, the MPG expects to release a Request for Proposal and related documents seeking the additional expertise we need to support the Parish through this process. The relevant Archdiocese advisors are involved in this process with the Parish. The current schedule is to release this to the market and decide on a partner in the first quarter of 2014 and then work with this partner through the second and third quarter 2014 to establish costed options.
This might seem like a long time frame, but the PPC and MPG have come to appreciate the challenges and opportunities presented in realising the Master Plan. We are all aware that we have a ‘once in a generation’ opportunity to provide for the future needs of the Parish community. We want to do this in a well-considered and risk managed way, and ensure that the Parish community gains the maximum long term benefit from this work. We want to leave the sort of legacy that the Parish Founders left us 60 years ago and that has been further enriched by so many of our current parishioners over many years.

If any members of the Parish and School community want to discuss progress at any stage, please feel to contact John Harte or Marianne Broadbent who are always available for updates and to share progress of the MPG process. (John Harte: jharte5@bigpond.com; 9459 1841; Marianne Broadbent: 0416 176 713)

The dedicated members of the MPG who are doing the real work for us include Gerard Mullins (Chair), Fr Michael, Catherine Brazzale, Colum Colfer, Judi Grollo, John O’Connell, Colin Organ, and Greg Thomas.