Parish Master Plan Report 2 of 2: April 2014

The St Martin’s Master Planning Group (MPG), established in early 2013 and formalised by the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) in May 2013, was directed to review the immediate problems facing the parish in terms of our church and other property and facilities. The key motivation is the need for serious maintenance requirements on our church building, and the poor and diminishing state of our other property assets.

**What the MPG Found:**
It soon became obvious that the maintenance issues and the need to upgrade our worshipping and other facilities were symptomatic of long term problems facing the parish. The facts include:

- Parish income barely meets our everyday running costs (even with the increase through the 2013 Stewardship Program)
- Our church and other parish buildings require major (and expensive) maintenance.
- We can’t fund the necessary repairs or any upgrades from SMOT’s operational budget and are unlikely to be able to do so in the future.
- We are now exclusively doing compliance and emergency maintenance (break-fix, safety hazards, etc.) only.
- Parish facilities (office, consulting/meeting rooms, accommodation of clergy, etc..) are well below contemporary standards.
- Our needs are shifting, and mass attendance is lower than it used to be.

‘One-off’ fixes, even if they could be funded, provide only a short period of stagnation. They postpone the inevitable difficult decisions which must be made in order for the St Martin of Tours community to continue as a viable parish in the modern world and with facilities that are not a constant drain on our finances.

**Our Future Approach - Better Use of our Assets:**
The MPG proceeded to exercise the stewardship invested in it via the PPC to thoroughly review the assets of the parish with the objective of utilising those assets to their full potential in the prevailing economy. The MPG came to the view, supported by the PPC that the Parish has substantial assets that, in today’s terms, can and should be much better utilised. It should be possible to use these more effectively to 1) meet the changing needs of the parish community, 2) fund our church improvements, and 3) to meet the facilities, maintenance and financial challenges that we have. These all impact our longer term ability to function as a great faith community.

The objective is to maximise the benefits that these assets can offer the whole parish community in perpetuity.

**The Commitment of the MPG**
Over the past 10 months, the MPG has met formally on 16 occasions with another 8 meetings conducted by sub groups on specific topics. To date more than 300 hours of labour has been invested in initial data collection, consultation with other experienced parties, and documentation preparation. Diocesan authorities have attended several meetings and are being kept informed of our progress.

In starting to scope the work, the MPG came to the view that the work to be undertaken is major and that to progress this we need more than volunteer efforts.
**Getting the Work Started:**
The work to identify and recommend a more detailed and costed approach to how we use our assets needs to be done in stages and in a risk managed way. In accordance with the schedule referred to in the December newsletter, a Request for Proposal (RFP) has been developed to engage professional services to assist in the redevelopment process. External assistance is required to research and establish well costed and viable scenarios for the development of the west side of Silk Street, as key to funding our Church redevelopment on the east side.

This RFP was prepared and presented to the PPC for approval and approval was duly granted. The RFP now has to be approved by the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne (CAM).

To clarify, there are two major projects within the Master Plan:

- **Project 1** - Repair and renewal of the church buildings and facilities on the east side of Silk Street (as defined in the 2012 Master Plan Document outline by Smith and Tracey - architects).
- **Project 2** - Redevelopment of the west side of Silk Street incorporating income generating assets.

The repair and renewal of the church facilities (Project 1) relies on the development of the western side of Silk Street (Project 2). Work on either Project can only proceed if the RFP is approved and the services required are delivered. In terms of sequencing, we would like to undertake Project 1 on the understanding that this will be funded by Project 2, as we know our needs for the Church building work is acute, both for repairs and to develop our worshipping space in the best way possible.

**Current status of the RFP:**
We are currently awaiting approval from the Archdiocese to proceed to get responses to the RFP. The RFP cannot be released to appropriate and competing vendors without the approval of CAM and this has been sought. The Vicar General has informed us that our project has been placed on the agenda of CAM’s Building and Finance Sub-committee which meets in early April.

If/when CAM’s approval is received, the RFP will then be released for responses by potential providers (and we have been advised by CAM regarding an appropriate range of providers). When the provider is chosen, we expect that provider to take about 8-10 months to complete their work. Again this timing has been based on the best advice available. The outcome will be researched and costed proposals that constitute the more detailed fuller Master Plan which would then be submitted to the PPC for approval.

While progress on these developments might seem to be taking a considerable time, the work to be undertaken is very significant. Doing anything less, means that we would get only a short term fix that would not address our long-term challenges. It is critical that we use the assets we have well. Again the goal is to ensure we have the funds to repair and renew our Church and parish facilities, AND a long term source of income to continue the great work of our Parish community.