



Liturgical design consultants Robert Habiger and Father Gil Sunghera, S.J.

more limited scale, providing insights relating to young adults as an asset in evolving our campus space plans.

THE CHURCH INTERIOR

“The heart of the matter is the church interior,” says Terri Ashmore, The Basilica’s Managing Director. “It has been a driving force since we developed a master facilities plan in 2012, for our entire campus and looking ahead to the interior restoration.”

The Basilica Landmark has funded several interior renovation projects already, including the Narthex, Sacristy, and Saint Anthony of Padua shrine. Habinger also cites the development of our Saint Joseph Chapel and Undercroft (The Basilica’s lower levels) in 2000 as great examples of what can be done.

“The main sanctuary space is an extremely large feat,” Habinger notes. All of The Basilica’s different ministries need to be considered — how would they be impacted and what additional space needs should be addressed? “For updates to be all inclusive, immediate needs must be met while also looking towards the future.”

Habinger says the process of assessing space is best described as “one step at a time.” Each step is broken down and analyzed in order to put together a vision. He challenges the leadership committee, led by committee chair Kathy Andrus, to think about guiding principles such as thoughtfulness, being inclusive to all peoples,

Church documents, and Catholic doctrine. “It is a difficult process,” he states, “but The Basilica has already been doing it. The vision is already very inclusive.”

His goal is to help us adapt space to create and enhance God’s presence with us. “Does the space give us a sense of God’s presence and learning about God? How does The Basilica community move forward in a fuller way in this location?”

CAMPUS NEEDS

Modern considerations also need to be put to the forefront, with safety as one of the most important considerations. “We have a lot of access points,” Ashmore says, “so security always needs to be assessed. We want to remain welcoming, but new technology and tools are available that weren’t available before.”

Accessibility is another key consideration in configuring further work on the campus. With guidance from our active Disability Awareness Committee, there is always more The Basilica can do to insure our campus is accessible and hospitable to all.

The Basilica has good space to accommodate smaller groups and large-scale events, but space(s) that can support 50 to 200 people in a comfortable setting must be addressed. “An opportunity is Cowley Center,” says Ashmore. “The question is if we could retrofit the building to fulfill these needs”

MANY PARTNERS

Parishioners at The Basilica are drawn to our diverse and vibrant downtown community. Ashmore shares that attracting young adults and families with children is vital to position The Basilica towards the future. So the committee needs to understand these demographics as they relate to our space. Habinger agrees that we need to get parishioner input in this process, to guide and advise the leadership committee to what is next for this community. Ashmore concurs, saying “it’s important to really involve [parishioners] in the conversation as we go.”

To that end, a campus planning team has been formed — a group of parish

members who will provide context and work with the consultants and parish leaders. In addition, Habinger shares, “engineers, acoustical and audio visual professionals will also add to the conversation and inform the decisions” as the committee moves forward.

Miller Dunwiddie Architecture has worked on The Basilica’s renovation projects since the 1990s and continues to address space functionality and accessibility needs. The Minneapolis-based firm will continue to be a key partner in planning future projects and Mortenson is our general contractor.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

A thoughtful plan of this scale takes time and the input of many people. Parish members will be asked to provide support and insights to the leadership committee as ideas evolve and specific plans are developed. With real plans still to be created, the cost of these improvements is not completely known. But, looking at past restoration and renovation projects at The Basilica, a capital campaign would likely occur. The Basilica Landmark, a separate 501(c)(3) organization organized to preserve, restore, and advance The Basilica campus, is generously funding the consultant costs and would manage a future capital campaign to bring these plans into fruition.

When The Basilica of Saint Mary was designed over a century ago, the breadth of change in and around our historic building could not have been imagined. Now our leadership committee is tasked to identify and address various considerations. Our community can take great pride in the deliberate and thoughtful care being taken throughout this process. ✚

George Norman is a parishioner and serves as an acolyte and on the 150th Anniversary Celebration Committee.