The term “strategic planning” often conjures up images of big businesses and scores of people with spreadsheets and flowcharts. While perhaps not an inaccurate image, the value of strategic planning is just as real and important for organizations that do not exist to make money or sell products. As the saying goes, organizations don’t plan to fail but they can fail to plan. With that in mind, The Basilica leadership has undertaken a strategic planning process to identify what makes The Basilica special, what brings people here, and what can we do to make it more of those things.

The strategic planning team includes members of the Parish Council, Finance Committee, and administration plus Father Bauer. Early on, we brought in a small consulting firm, MacCallum Ross, to help guide the development of our base plan, using a methodology they have successfully used with other non-profit and faith-based organizations. Informed by our mission, vision, and values, the planning team identified what we could do to enable those to be lived every day.

One of the hardest parts of any planning process is moving from the theoretical to the concrete. It was no different in this process. As consultant Patti Ross noted, “frequently in the theoretical stage you are entirely focused upon vast, abstract possibilities. It’s always wonderful to think things like ‘we are going to make a difference to racial reconciliation,’ but moving to the concrete stage requires you to face up to what actions are available to you, given your resources. The other thing about moving to the concrete is that possibilities and current activities are always left behind. And people never feel comfortable doing less or giving up something, as it requires saying ‘no.’ The natural tendency is to keep adding more.”
After many meetings and discussions, our planning team brought the plan to life around three specific areas of focus:

**The Arts:** Move, inspire, and transform individuals and communities through excellence in the arts and creative practices.

**Inclusivity:** Build a culture where people feel valued, welcome, integrated, and included.

**Homelessness:** Respond to the needs of people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

It’s important to note that these areas of focus are not exclusive nor intended to replace or preclude the exceptional work that is ongoing every day at The Basilica. These are intended to be something of a lens, through which we can view, evaluate, and assess the work of our many ministries to help utilize our resources most effectively in support of our mission.

As Parish Council chair and planning committee member Mary Gleich-Matthews observed, “Our primary commitment during this process was to ensure that The Basilica of Saint Mary will always be a Catholic community with a rich sacramental and liturgical presence as well as a voice in downtown Minneapolis for justice and inclusion. Any decision made during the strategic planning had to be made with these principles in mind.”

As is always the case in a planning process, the heavy lifting begins once the plan comes together. The next steps, currently underway, include assessing what we are doing today across our ministries and where it fits within the newly defined areas of focus. Staff input plus feedback from volunteer ministry leaders and volunteers will all be critical.

As a parishioner and a planning committee participant, I’m excited to watch the plan brought to life. Will the many reasons I’ve chosen The Basilica as my church change as a result? More than likely not. What I hope will happen is that The Basilica will be even more of the church I love, that lives its mission and values for all of its many constituencies. A place that “seeks the well-being of the city” which it calls home.

In the eyes of Father Bauer, the strategic planning process has opened the door to the next phase of The Basilica’s history and legacy. He notes, “The future will happen whether we plan for it or not. So it’s vital that we plan for it. I believe our strategic plan is essential and will ensure that we will have a future full of hope.”

Bob Kleiber is a member of the Strategic Planning Committee and has been a parishioner since 2006.