



**St. Michael the Archangel Parish  
Feasibility Study  
Executive Summary of the Findings & Recommendations**

**Introduction & Methodology**

*Greater Mission, LLC* was selected in September 2013 to conduct a Feasibility Study for a proposed parish capital campaign. The Study was conducted in October and November 2013. A Gift Analysis/Constituent Study was conducted in conjunction with *DonorSearch*. A case statement, study questionnaire and interview list was produced with the assistance of parish clergy and lay leaders. The study consisted of input from parishioners through individual interviews, an Open Town Hall meeting and an In-Pew survey. A total of 20 individual interviews of 29 parishioners were conducted. Parishioners were selected for the interviews to represent various constituencies of the parish. Forty- (40) parishioners attended the Town Hall meeting on November 4<sup>th</sup> and one hundred and thirty-two parishioners (132) responded to the In-Pew survey. *The case tested was to raise \$1.5 million or more to build a multi-purpose center that will serve as temporary worship space and include classrooms and offices for the parish.*

**Key Findings:**

**Appreciation of Parish and Challenges Facing the Parish:**

Parishioners most often mentioned Fr. Branson, his homilies and leadership as highly appreciated, as well as, the friendliness and welcoming of the parish community. The most frequently cited challenges were: building the hall, raising the funds to build the hall, and the fact the parish has many parishioners who are snowbirds.

**Case for Support:**

Over 92% of the parishioners who responded were in favor of the case and moving forward to build the parish center. This is a combined total from the Interviews and In-Pew survey. Attendees at the Town Hall meeting voiced strong support for the case.

**Can the Parish Raise \$1.5 Million or More?**

The combined responses of all of the participants indicated that 65% felt the parish could raise \$1.5

million or more. However, these same parishioners also expressed concern that the parish may not be large enough or wealthy enough to reach the goal.

**Would you support the campaign financially?**

Not a single respondent declined to give to the campaign. While there were a limited number who said they were unsure about making a gift, over 95% said they would make a gift if a campaign were conducted.

**Level of Giving**

The following table was presented to parishioners. The vast majority who indicated they would make a gift stated the gift would be at the lower end of the Base or Mid Tier levels. Only a single Lead Gift was identified during the study. The lack of Lead Tier potential is troubling. The following are the gifts identified during the study:

Gift Level	Number Identified	Cumulative Total
<b>Lead Tier</b>		
\$150,000	0	\$0
\$100,000	0	\$0
\$60,000	1	\$60,000
<b>Mid Tier</b>		
\$25,000	1	\$85,000
\$10,000	19	\$275,000
\$5,000	10	\$325,000
<b>Base Tier</b>		
\$2,500	39	\$422,500
Below \$2,500	97	\$568,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>\$568,000</b>

**Would you be willing to volunteer to assist with a campaign?**

The combined responses of participating parishioners indicated that 55% would volunteer to assist with a campaign. Seventeen (17) were willing to open their homes for receptions and eleven (11) were willing to serve as Campaign Advocates. These figures indicate very strong volunteer support.

### **Greatest Obstacles to Conducting a Campaign**

The most common theme among respondents was that they felt the parish must move forward with a building and that failure to do so would stunt the growth of the parish. Parishioners also noted a sense of frustration that there have been many promises made about building the parish center and yet nothing has happened. In addition, the following were most often mentioned as potential obstacles to a campaign:

- The parish is not well known enough in the community.
- This is not a wealthy community.
- The snowbirds must support the campaign or it won't be successful.
- The parish is too small to raise this much money.
- Many people are on fixed incomes.

### **Do you have any advice to give to parish leaders to assist with their decision making process?**

Parishioners strongly indicated their desire to move forward. They expressed concern that growth cannot happen without a facility but are concerned about being able to maintain a new facility. They feel that there are many Catholics in the area who would come to St. Michael's if there were a parish facility. In addition, the following were the most frequently cited responses:

- The campaign must tap into the entire parish community.
- We should only build what we can afford.
- We cannot do this without help from the diocese.
- The campaign must offer naming/memorial opportunities.
- We must be willing to sacrifice for this building.

### **Conclusions to the Findings**

The following is a synopsis of more detailed findings addressed in the full study report.

- St. Michael the Archangel is a growing and vibrant Catholic community that is poised to grow even more dramatically due to the projected growth of San Tan Valley.
- Fr. Branson is widely respected and has won the support of the parish.
- The level of volunteerism for a campaign is extremely high which is a key factor for a successful campaign.
- A significant number of parishioners are willing to contribute financially to the campaign.
- The gift levels indicated by parishioners are very low and need to be increased if a campaign is to be successful.

- Conducting a campaign and failing to build would have a significant detrimental effect on the parish.
- There is a strong sense of anticipation to move forward at this time.
- At present a campaign can be conducted but a goal of \$1.5 million is unlikely.
- To achieve a goal of \$1.25 million the parish must receive gifts from at least 275 of the 420 parishioners at an average gift of \$4,600 payable over a 3 to 5 year period.

### **Recommendations**

1. St. Michael the Archangel parish should work with its architect and builders to "right-size" the facility to meet its potential capacity to raise funds.
2. The parish should launch a capital campaign to construct the multi-purpose center with a public goal of \$1.25 million and a challenge goal of \$1.5 million during the winter of 2014.
3. We recommend that an aggressive gift table be designed for the campaign that will challenge parishioners to support the campaign at levels to offset the lack of Lead Tier gifts.
4. We recommend that the parish begin a communication effort to inform parishioners of current progress with the county, the current Building Fund and plans for the building. Parishioners should also be informed about how savings from the current budget (rental fees) can be used to offset future operational expenses.
5. We recommend that there be a publicity program in the community about the plans to conduct the campaign and build the parish center.
6. We recommend that the parish utilize professional counsel to conduct the above-mentioned campaign.

### **Final Thoughts**

St. Michael the Archangel parish has grown dramatically in the past year and is at "critical mass" in current facilities. It can grow no further in its current space and no other larger space is available. While there is strong willingness by parishioners to move forward the gift levels indicated in the study must be elevated in order for a campaign to be successful. It will be necessary to build upon the strong desire to move forward, and the financial potential that continued growth would certainly bring in the future, to achieve success. *Greater Mission* has been honored to serve the parish during this study and would be proud to assist the parish in the future.