

**Guidelines**  
**for**  
**Construction and Renovation**  
**of**  
**Parish Facilities**



**Building Commission**  
**Diocese of Des Moines**  
**2018**

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# Diocesan Building Commission

These guidelines are intended to assist parishes and diocesan institutions in the construction and/or renovation of cost-effective facilities that support the pastoral ministry of the parish or institution. Because the approval of the Bishop is required for any project beyond the ordinary administration of the parish, the Bishop has appointed the Diocesan Building Commission to advise him and parishes/institutions regarding new construction or renovation plans.

The Building Commission and diocesan staff strive to create a collaborative, team-oriented approach with the parish leadership and encourage the parish to do the same with its own building committee. Assembling the right team early in the project's planning is critical. Making sound decisions early in the process will save significant time, money and effort as the project continues.

The review of a parish project by the Bishop and the Diocesan Building Commission is required to assure that it contributes to the spiritual welfare of the faithful, and that the parish/institution has the necessary means to both construct and maintain the building.

One of the main foundations for any church construction or renovation project in the diocese will be the document from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture and Worship." It is recommended that this document be studied in detail by the parish committee which will provide leadership for any project related to worship space construction or renovation.

"One of the most significant and formative experiences in the life of a parish community is the process of building or renovating a church. As part of that process, parish members are called upon to study the Church's teaching and liturgical theology and to reflect upon their personal pieties, their individual tastes, and the parish history. By bringing together these personal and ecclesial elements in faith and in charity, parishioners help to build a new structure and to renew their parish community. The decision-making process and the parish education component that are part of the building experience can assist the parish and its individual members to deepen their sense of Catholic identity. This identity is shaped by the history of the particular parish, by its relationship to other parishes in the local Church known as the diocese, and by its relationship within the communion of local Churches known as the Roman Catholic Church. ...

Decisions about church art and architecture should always be based upon the theology of the Eucharistic assembly and its liturgical action and the understanding of the Church as the house of God on earth."

*"Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture, and Worship"*  
*U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops*

## **Project Steps**

These are the general steps involved in a facilities improvement project. The Building Commission will work with the parish/institution to provide guidance and support throughout the process. Meeting times and locations will be planned to be mutually beneficial to all involved.

### **Pastoral Planning**

The Pastoral Council is responsible for ongoing pastoral planning for the parish. This involves discussions regarding future needs of the parish looking forward as much as 20 years. Items to consider are future growth, age and condition of current physical plant, educational needs, new programs etc. To accomplish this, time must be regularly set aside at meetings for this purpose. As a part of the pastoral planning process, projects may be identified as necessary for the parish. These potential projects may include building renovations, new construction or updating of major equipment.

**Any project which includes new church construction or changes to the arrangement of existing worship space must be coordinated through the Diocesan Office for Worship. Participation in the Diocesan Building Commission process will proceed based on the results of that consultation.**

**Any other project with a projected cost greater than \$50,000 also must be submitted through the Diocesan Building Commission process.**

### **Approval from Bishop to study a project**

When a parish/institution identifies the need for a potential project, the first step to be taken is by the pastor of the parish or institutional leader who will write the Bishop and ask his permission to prepare a needs assessment relating to the project.

The Bishop will respond in writing to that letter.

### **Needs Assessment**

If the Bishop grants approval, the diocesan Director of Property Management will schedule an orientation meeting at the parish/institution to discuss the Diocesan Building Commission process.

The initial step in that process is for the parish/institution to form a Needs Assessment Committee with qualified members who will gather pertinent information and consider various approaches to addressing identified needs. Having done so, it will then be possible to develop the rationale for one or more possibilities which might address those needs. If necessary, the parish/institution should search outside its membership to obtain the necessary expertise to assist in this phase.

## **First Meeting with the Diocesan Building Commission**

Representatives of the parish meet with the Building Commission to present their needs assessment and how it relates to the parish's pastoral plan for ministry. At this meeting the parish requests permission to proceed with the proposed project.

The Building Commission recommends approval of the pastoral plan and needs assessment, and recommends that the Bishop grant permission to proceed with a feasibility study and conceptual planning. The Bishop will inform the pastor by letter of these decisions.

It is possible that projects with an estimated cost of \$50,000 to \$150,000 can be approved following one meeting of the Building Commission if sufficient detail regarding the project has been provided. Such consideration will be made on a case by case basis.

## **Parish/Institutional Work**

The parish/institution prepares for the planning process.

The diocesan Director of Development schedules an orientation meeting at the parish/institution to explain and discuss feasibility studies and the overall fundraising process. This can include guidance for hiring consultants, potential costs and timeframes, and alternate options. The parish/institution then proceeds with the feasibility study, with the understanding that the consultant for that process may or may not be involved in the actual fundraising portion of the project.

The parish/institution forms a building committee which initiates a process for design and construction of the project. The traditional design and construction project delivery approach is the “Design-Bid-Build” process. For this approach, the committee hires architect/design consultants to prepare construction design documents relating to the project. If the project involves liturgical or educational aspects, the Diocesan Director of Worship or Diocesan Superintendent of Schools and other appropriate consultants in those fields must be involved in the entire planning process. The project will then be bid to at least three qualified general contractors in a competitive bid process led by the architect. A list of contractors which have been involved with successful projects throughout the diocese will be available from the Director of Property Management.

With the approval of the Diocesan Building Commission, the building committee may consider an alternative project delivery method. An alternative project delivery approach involves engaging a contractor utilizing a competitive Qualifications Based Selection (QBS) process. These approaches include Design Build, Construction Management (Agent and At-Risk), and negotiated General Construction. In each case, the committee interviews at least three contractors who are qualified to manage a contract of the size anticipated by the parish/institution. Once selected, the contractor prepares estimates at each document development phase with the goal to manage project costs. Each of these approaches ultimately requires the contracting entity to prepare a Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) prior to the start of construction.

**If the project involves construction or renovation of worship space, the pastor must meet with the Diocesan Director of Worship. A list of recommended liturgical consultants will be provided in order that expertise in that area is available to facilitate the planning. Only after the plan for the worship space has been developed and approved will permission be given to move forward with the remainder of the Church renovation or construction project.**

When developing any new building project, or significantly renovating an existing building, parishes and institutions should plan for energy efficiency and the use of renewable sources of energy. While these methods may initially entail more expense, well-planned systems will more than pay for themselves over time, and reflect our commitment to be good stewards of God’s resources.

Square footage needs must be addressed before any drawings are made. The architect (for a design, bid build process) or the contractor (for a qualification based selection) will provide cost estimates based on

the plan. The diocesan Director of Property Management can assist with a review of the plan and cost estimates.

Throughout the process, ample opportunity must be provided for information to be presented to parishioners or those served by the institution for the purpose of seeking their input and feedback. It is important that the pastoral plan, needs assessment, feasibility study and conceptual drawings be included in the presentations to the parish/institution community.

After significant input, discussion and revision, the parish, represented by the finance and pastoral councils, recommends approval of the project to the pastor. Following similar input, discussion and revision, the board of the institution will recommend approval of the project to the institution leadership.

### **Second Meeting with the Building Commission**

**Representatives of the parish/institution, including the pastor/institutional leader, present the feasibility study and conceptual plans to the Building Commission. (It would be helpful for written information to be submitted 15 days in advance of the meeting.) The Commission will be interested in the financial condition of the parish, the results of the feasibility study, and the details of the conceptual plans which include access, parking, seating, liturgical and educational elements and others. The Commission will ask questions to ascertain if the project, as presented, will be affordable to the parish and meets the needs of the parish.**

Following this presentation, the Building Commission determines whether it should recommend to the Bishop approval of the feasibility study and conceptual plans. If that recommendation is accepted, the Bishop will give permission to proceed to the fundraising and design phase. This decision will be communicated in a letter from the Bishop to the pastor/institutional leader.

## **Parish/Institution begins work on final design and fundraising**

### **Fundraising**

In general terms, fundraising for the specific project should be planned over a three year period. All of the necessary funds for a project must be pledged and 50% must be collected before construction can proceed.

Unless approved by the Building Commission and Bishop for large projects, no long term debt is to be incurred. Short term construction loans are to be negotiated with local lending institutions. The Diocese is not in a position to guarantee parish construction loans.

### **Final Design**

Final design and construction documents are developed with associated cost estimates. These estimates must be in line with fundraising progress.

### **Third meeting with the Building Commission**

**The pastor/institutional leader and parish/institution representatives present the final fundraising information and project design to the Diocesan Building Commission.**

The Building Commission recommends to the Bishop approval of all or part of the project based on fundraising and estimated costs. The Bishop will communicate his decision to the pastor/institutional leader by letter.

### **Selection of Contractor in Design, Bid, Build Process**

The parish/institution interviews potential bidders and seeks bids from at least three qualified contractors.

The parish/institution analyzes the bids and chooses the lowest qualified bid. The Building Commission reviews the bid tabulation and approves the bid. (This generally does not involve a meeting of the commission.)

### **Contracts and Insurance Coverage**

The contract must be sent to the Diocesan Director of Property Management for review. Catholic Mutual Group (CMG) automatically provides \$10 Million coverage of builders' risk insurance. The contract must be approved and evidence of necessary insurance, bonds, lien waivers and 5% retainage provided. The Director of Property Management will notify CMG that the project is starting and work with CMG to assure that necessary information is added to the property appraisal listing for the parish/institution.

The pastor/institutional leader contacts the Bishop requesting appropriate proxies to hold a corporation meeting and sign contracts.

Construction of the project proceeds. Progress reports to the Building Commission are made by the Director of Property Management.

## **Concluding Activities**

The parish/institution schedules dedication of the project through the bishop's office.

A final report is made by the Director of Property Management to the Building Commission. The parish or institution provides one bound paper copy of project drawings and project manual and one electronic copy (pdf files) for the diocesan archives. The architect or general contractor must complete necessary forms for the new construction or major building renovation to be included in property insurance coverage provided through Catholic Mutual Group.

# Diocese of Des Moines

## Facilities Renovation/Construction Process

