Immaculate Conception retained CCS, a private fundraising firm, to undertake a comprehensive planning study as a preliminary step toward launching a major fundraising campaign to build a new church at a nearby location. The funds would be used to cover the cost of the new property and to construct a new larger worship space with ample parking, religious education classrooms, administrative offices, a rectory, and a parish hall.

The following is a summary of the study results, which CCS compiled from 53 one-on-one strategic conversations and 426 in-pew surveys.

Study Findings

In summary, study interviews and surveys revealed:

* Immaculate Conception Church is held in high regard – 96.2% of interviewees and 90.6% of in-pew survey respondents had a positive overall perception of the church.
* The need for a new and expanded worship space is widely recognized – 71.7% of interviewees and 73.7% of in—pew survey respondents believe that building a new church should be a priority for the parish.
* Overall, the proposed project is supported – 69.8% of interviewees and 74.4% of in-pew survey respondents reacted “positively” or “very positively” to the proposed plans. About 20% had a mixed response and would require more information before supporting the project.
* The parish is generally supportive of the idea of relocating to a different site – 64.2% of interviewees and 55.9% of in-pew survey respondents agreed with the plan to relocate. Many people voiced concerns about providing shuttle services or means to accommodate parishioners that usually walk to the church.
* The timing is right – 79.3% of interviewees believe that now is the right time for the parish to begin a fundraising campaign to support this project.
* Parishioners will support it **–** There were high percentage of interviewees and in-pew respondents willingly provided gift indications. However, interviewees and respondents did not self-indicate the breadth of five- and six-figure gifts needed to support raising $3 million in a single campaign.

Analysis & Recommendations

On the basis of their experience and the study findings, CCS offers the following baseline analysis:

* Immaculate Conception Church should develop the full master plan for the site, while also planning to construct the facilities in phases. Many people expressed a desire to see more about the proposed plans, so these plans should be shared with parishioners as they develop. There should be an open dialogue throughout the process.
* CCS recommends that the church focus on improving giving and tracking systems. Parishioners should be able to give online and link bank accounts to the church. The church should also make sure that it has up-to-date contact information for every parishioner, because communication will be central to the campaign’s success.
* $3 million is a very high goal for the parish. CCS is recommending a goal of $1.5 million for this campaign. This number can be increased if large gifts begin to come in, but $1.5 million is a realistic, attainable goal.
* CCS recommends a 4-month campaign timeline that focuses on raising funds over a five-year period to support completion of a first phase of the project.
* To effectively plan and implement a large-scale campaign for Immaculate Conception Church, a solid core of dedicated and effective leaders must be identified, recruited, and trained. Leadership recruitment and lead gift solicitation will require a great deal of strategy and creative engagement.
* Focusing on a phased approach that builds upon early success will be especially critical for the campaign.
* The challenge of raising $1.5 million over five years should not be underestimated. This effort will take generous and sacrificial commitments of leadership and financial support from the parish community.