

**Joliet Diocese Targeted Restructuring Process - Phase 3
Parish Session #2 Small Group Feedback for Submission to TRC**

Of the draft scenarios presented, which option seemed to be most accepted by the participants?

Most accepted option was #4 – St. John the Apostle Parish amalgamates into St. Alexander Parish; St. John the Apostle Church remains open as a worship site. Runner-up was #1 – St. John the Apostle Parish and St. Alexander Parish merge into a new parish; Both worship sites remain open.

Of the draft scenarios presented, which option seemed to be least accepted by the participants?

Least accepted were both #2 – St. John the Apostle Parish and St. Alexander Parish merge into a new parish at St. Alexander Parish; St. John the Apostle Church is closed and #3 – St. John the Apostle Parish amalgamates into St. Alexander Parish; St. John the Apostle Church is closed.

List any additions or changes to the draft scenarios that were suggested by the participants.

Clarification to option #4 - Keeping St. John the Apostle church as a worship site would most likely mean limited use of the church (weekends); all expense reduction savings would be funneled into the capital expense fund to repair and maintain all buildings of the new amalgamated parish.

List any other feedback shared by the participants.

Option #4 feedback

- Important to keep a worship site at St. John the Apostle for our Hispanic community (living in the neighborhood on north side of tracks), our parishioners who walk to Mass, and our older parishioners who might find it more challenging to travel further for Mass.
- Retaining St. John the Apostle church as a secondary worship site would mean a new mindset – less Mass times and very limited activity to keep expenses low. For example, one 4:00 or 5:00 PM Mass between the two sites.
- Without St. John the Apostle church as a worship site, many parishioners have indicated, for various reasons, that they would seek other parish options (St. Joseph, Sacred Heart, or St. Pius) and not attend Mass at St. Alexander. The potential loss of parishioners could put a strain on weekly collections for the newly formed parish.
- Regarding the two parishes, some say we are all “Villa Park” but that is not true – many of us live in Lombard and go to St. John due to established parish boundaries. Farther to go to St. Alexander to attend Mass.

Option #4 Feedback from our Hispanic Community

- Maintain the St. John the Apostle worship site – keep Spanish Mass at 12:30PM.
- Would like to see our amazing community kept intact and not dispersed due to additional distance to travel (over the railroad tracks and along busy St. Charles Road). This is important for North Villa Park and North Lombard as there are no other churches within walking distance.
- If St. John is closed, there is a possibility that some Hispanic parishioners would migrate to other parishes with Spanish Masses at St. Joseph, St. Pius or St. Matthew. Most do not like a 6:00PM Mass time, so if St. Alexander is the main parish, a 12:30 PM Spanish Mass would need to be added.
- The RE program is very good and close to home for many families – 100 of 105 students are of Hispanic ethnicity and live in the neighborhood. If RE is not offered at the St. John the Apostle site, a concern is that some families would not attend at St. Alexander and might go elsewhere or not attend at all.
- The Hispanic community has grown consistently and is the most well-attended Mass. We want to continue working to evangelize to young people and their families.
- A bilingual staff person would be needed at the primary parish.

Option #4 Feedback Seton Academy Catholic Montessori School

- The principal, staff, and parents are very concerned that Seton has a home to educate their students and continue their BIG mission to evangelize! The St. John the Apostle site gives students access to a church, multiple classrooms, a safe, large outdoor area for recess and a location for cultivating their school garden.

Option #1 Feedback

- If a merger, would like to hear that many at St. Alexander are excited to form a new parish with a new name to celebrate the new community and wonderful possibilities as we move forward.
- Both sides (parishes) need to give up something in a merger – we could come together on an equal footing as a new parish with a new name – (suggestion / Our Lady of Good Counsel).
- Many see no reason to force St. Alexander's to change its name (no merger). A new parish name would cause many to lose good memories and cause a lot of pain and resentment.

Option #2 & #3 Feedback

- Parishioners on the north side of the tracks want to retain a worship site that is convenient for walking, travel without train delays, and provides easy accessibility.
- There is concern about parking accommodations and handicap accessibility at St. Alexander.
- If the St. John the Apostle church building closes, Seton would need to see if there is a place for them at the primary parish, or if the Diocese could help the school find a suitable location with another parish.

Feedback about infrastructure costs:

- Parishioners are still totally confused about the infrastructure repairs needed. The numbers are just numbers – what are the repairs we need to make? We want transparency about the repairs, who is determining the items and the costs. Where do we get this information – committee or Pastor?
- Concern about the ability of the amalgamated or merged parish to raise the funds needed to maintain and repair two sites based on cost of capital expenses on chart in years 4-6.
- Concern that funds would be solicited for facility repairs/improvements for both sites and if the financial goal was not achieved by the combined parish by year 5, the worship site at St. John the Apostle would be closed. Very devastating and upsetting to donors!
- Cutting costs at the St. John worship site could serve to help with infrastructure expenses. Suggestions include: Open church section of building only on weekends. The back half of the building could be closed off since it has its own separate mechanicals. The assessment for future facility repairs would be reduced. Repairs, maintenance, services, materials, supplies, and utilities would be significantly reduced.
- Without knowing specifics about the future infrastructure needs for St. John the Apostle and St. Alexander, closing and selling the St. John property may be the most practical way to financially support the long-term infrastructure needs at the amalgamated parish.

General feedback/comments

- Many parishioners expressed concern about the fate of Seton Academy which has been housed in our church for over 30 years and is part of our faith community.
- No explanation of the rationale used to create the scenarios presented to us has been given and clearly stated. Seems like the scenarios were developed based on the larger parishes assuming the smaller ones.
- Can our beautiful grotto be moved if only the primary parish worship site is open? A loss for the neighborhood as a lot of people visit there to pray when the church is not open.
- How would these options affect the employees of both parishes?
- If St. John the Apostle church closed and the land was sold to a developer, what impact would that have on the neighborhood?