Q. Can you explain how the Master Plan was guided by input from SFX?

A. The Master Plan is the result of a truly informed and well-guided process, building checkpoints with SFX leaders into every step of the journey. Following intensive interviews, observations and group workshops, assumptions, goals, and guiding “drivers” were reviewed and confirmed with SFX leaders. Recommendations were required to deliver on specific needs as outlined by SFX. In summary, the planning process was an ideal one in that it married third party expertise with the vision and input of hundreds of SFX stakeholders.

Q. How will the capital campaign be funded? Who will contribute?

A. The capital campaign committee is casting a net both far and wide to reach out to the extended St. Francis Xavier community, providing an opportunity for all to contribute to this significant effort. Parishioners, school families, past school parents, businesses and alumni are all invited to consider a gift to the campaign.

Q: How will our Sharing Parish in Chicago, St. Thomas of Canterbury, benefit from this campaign?

A: The students of St. Thomas of Canterbury School directly benefit from the funds that we collect as a source of scholarships for its students. This ultimately eases the operating burden on St. Thomas while also providing increased access to a Catholic education for many students who would not otherwise enjoy that opportunity.

Q: How does this campaign benefit our Sharing Parish in Haiti, Immaculate Conception?

A: By directing a small percentage of what we raise through To Teach Who Christ Is to Haiti, SFX will fund the construction of six classrooms, helping to fulfill Pope Francis’ call to “find new ways to spread the word to every corner of the world.” This commitment is also consistent with the theme of the Archdiocesan campaign and our own Parish Mission Statement “to move closer to God in all that we do.”
Q. Why is the execution of Phase I divided into four sequences?

A. Because we are building and renovating a campus dominated by structures that are still in use, a phasing of construction is required. This phasing also provides for the completion of some portions of the plan in advance of others, as opposed to waiting until all funds are collected to commence work on the entire project at one time.

Q: How will we manage the operational and maintenance costs associated with additional physical structures?

A: Increased costs will be offset by the installation of energy efficient heating and cooling systems that will replace our hazardously outdated, expensive and wasteful systems. Over time, reduced operating costs will literally pay for themselves across our campus: in the church, in our parish offices, and in the gym/school area.

Q: How will the introduction of this campaign impact overall parishioner engagement?

A: We are grateful that new families continue to join our parish (we have added over 200 in just the past five years), furthering a general trend of growth and vitality that is not typical across the Archdiocese. As we grow as one interconnected body, we also look to parishioners to grow in their commitment as stewards of all that we have inherited. To Teach Who Christ Is promises to significantly improve our ability to meet the needs of a wide range of parish members. As we better invite and serve parishioners, we hope to realize a correlated increase in overall parishioner engagement, resulting in a strong and sustainable community for years to come.

Q: Why does the school and PREP need more space? Does this take into account the possibility that enrollment may soften in future years?

A: Cannon Design, our partner in this process, has carefully designed flexible and adaptable space within education building areas that may be repurposed over time to meet evolving needs. The school’s current and critical need is classroom space, driven by a student population that has increased by 65% since 2008. SFX’s PREP population is thriving and has exceeded capacity within our current structure. Our growing ministries also require useful meeting and education spaces—a need that will be met with new classrooms designed to adapt to the needs of adult learners.
Where student learners will explore and learn during the day, parishioners spanning many age groups will meet, plan and learn during weekend, late afternoon and evening hours. Should school enrollment dip in future years, these flexible spaces will be invaluable daytime resources for the many teachers and programs that currently have no permanent “home base,” including art, music, language, middle school religion, counseling, our school nurse, advisory, formations, differentiation and more.

Q. Is the school looking to grow enrollment? Why did we move to a three-homeroom format for this year’s Kindergarten and will this happen again?

A. The goal of SFX School is to maintain its current size. In the mid 1990’s, SFX School was forced to turn away almost 20 new Kindergarten families in a single year when it elected to maintain a two-homeroom configuration despite a spike in applications. Those families (and their students and siblings) joined other schools and parishes. Several years later, when SFX saw a period of attrition, the administration realized that opening a third Kindergarten to meet a bump in demand might have stemmed future enrollment softness. This learning, coupled with our wish to accommodate as many new families as possible, informed SFX’s decision to open a third Kindergarten homeroom in 2014.

While SFX will maintain a two-homeroom structure as a matter of course, the parish would like the flexibility to accommodate infrequent demand for a third homeroom within these early childhood years to aid in sustaining a healthy enrollment over time.

Q. Historically, the enrollment of a parish school ebbs and flows. Why should we expand now when we are likely to see attrition at some point in the future?

A. While we are open to the possibility that our current enrollment may soften over time, we feel strongly that our school should maintain a two-homeroom structure across all grades. Should enrollment shrink significantly, there would still be a need for the same number of dedicated homeroom spaces. In prior years, SFX did not offer the many sections of preschool programming it does today, and these classrooms would need to be maintained moving forward. Additionally, should the need for classroom space somehow decrease, specials, technology and support staff would make excellent use of newly opened spaces for office, meeting and teaching purposes.
Q. Why do we need three new classrooms?

A. We are currently able to effectively meet the needs of our students due to the talents and flexibility of our teaching staff. However, the optimal facility for our size would require at least three additional classrooms. Many of our rooms have been repurposed to accommodate our growth both in terms of size and breadth of services: our specials teachers operate without dedicated spaces, one of our community meeting rooms has converted into a classroom, and additional segments of the parish office have been acquired for preschool use. Creating new, flexible spaces will similarly alleviate the demand for additional PREP classrooms, which may also be repurposed as meeting spaces after school and PREP hours.

Q. Would it be more affordable to tear the entire school structure down and start from scratch?

A. Based on Cannon Design’s calculations, tearing down the existing school structures and building a new structure to meet the needs outlined in the Master Plan would cost roughly $35 million. This cost does not include improvements to the parish offices, rectory or church, which are also covered in the Master Plan.

Q. How will we resource large meeting and presentation needs when the Xavier Room is converted into an Early Learning Center? Where will students eat lunch?

A. Parish and school communities will gain a new multi-purpose atrium, as well as a renovated and open community gathering space that occupies almost half of the first floor of the parish office. Once Phase I is completed these dual locations will allow for more options for community gatherings: with the atrium adjacent to gym, school and PREP functions and the new space in the parish office in proximity of the church for gatherings that flow from the liturgy. Depending on the rate of funding, there may be a period of time before the atrium is added (in Sequence 3). While this is not ideal, we feel the benefit of completing Phase I in its entirely strongly outweighs the temporary sacrifice of space leading to Sequence 3. The completion of Phase I will see an increase in overall community space from 3,789 square feet to 6,300 square feet.

Until the atrium is added, school administration will explore many alternatives for the school lunch hour, such as scheduling lunch in the gym or exploring the flexible and more open design.
of new preschool rooms not in use during the afternoon hours. The school has learned to be creative and resourceful with regard to its space and this strength will serve it well throughout periods of construction.

Q. How will the “link” education building improve safety and accessibility to classrooms?

A. The advantage of the “link” building is that, in addition to creating much needed classroom space, it also provides for a central, secure, and wheelchair accessible entrance to the entire school. This central entrance can be designed to meet modern day safety guidelines and will allow for an office “check point” before guests can enter school hallways (currently, guests may proceed down the lower floor stairs instead of entering the upstairs office to check in). Adding an elevator will equip our building for 21st century needs, will provide accessibility to students experiencing temporary injuries (e.g., crutches and wheelchairs) and will make special visits like Grandparents’ Day more enjoyable for all.

Q: We just completed a significant investment in the school’s plaza. Why are we undertaking a capital project in this special location?

A: The creation of the Centennial Plaza marked the school’s 100th birthday by establishing a central gathering space to connect the east and west buildings, with a significant portion of proceeds donated to the SFX School Endowment. Master Planning has enabled us to expand this “linking” and destination concept into an addition that will serve as a true destination point for all education functions. As part of this vision, the engraved pavers and surrounding plaza will be carefully and purposefully integrated into a more impressive and functional main entrance. In addition to providing much needed space, this new building will greatly improve safety and security for all parish education programs. In this way, we respect the gifts of the past while working toward a bright future.

Q: Why are we making changes in the Xavier Room, a space that was just recently renovated during the Heritage Campaign?

A: Much needed work was completed in the Xavier Room a decade ago to ensure its proper care and preservation. Because this space has been properly restored, it is prepped and ready for the additional enhancement that comes with its designation as an Early Learning Center. A spacious
and highly functional atrium and gathering space, in addition to a renovated and opened space in the existing parish office building (current preschool), will replace this room. This will provide multiple and expanded meeting spaces for parish use. Overall community space will increase from 3,789 to 6,300 square feet in Phase One alone.

Q: Why is the preschool moving from the parish office into the Xavier Room? How will this benefit the entire parish?

A: In the past five years, St. Francis Xavier has made a significant investment into its Early Childhood program to better serve the needs of existing school and parish families, to ultimately improve student outcomes through eight grade and beyond, and to attract young, engaged families to our parish. Preschool is a gateway to growth and vitality for SFX, and the school’s program has thrived in response to its efforts to build a curriculum on par or superior to that of all area preschools. Moving the preschool out of the parish offices also opens space to be refurbished into a first floor meeting space for adult parishioners, which will benefit from the addition of an elevator, a more accessible entrance, and closer proximity to the church for post-liturgy gatherings.

Relocating our preschool classrooms to the Xavier Room will also further strengthen the preschool program by providing increased and necessary space, the facility to interact with our primary grade student population, multi-purpose spaces for movement, and a true Early Childhood destination featuring child-centered space for young families who are eager to be integrated into the school community. Importantly, the new Early Learning space will provide flexibility for use by other groups such as summer programming, PREP, Moms & Tots (a free program open to all parishioners), and Liturgy of the Word.

Q: How will our campus parking inadequacies be addressed?

A: Parking will be enhanced through this and later phases of the Master Plan. More accessible parking will be added in this first phase as part of the Archdiocesan Capital Campaign. Future phases include additional parking that results in a safer and less congested drop-off and pick-up-route for school, PREP and Mass. Overall, our parking layout will be mapped out in a more meaningful way as part of an interconnected campus that is built around a centralized St. Francis Square.
Q: How does the campaign address the needs of senior parishioners?

A: All new structures erected through the Master Plan will offer seniors increased accessibility, functionality and comfort. Both the church and the parish office will become increasingly useful to this group through the installation of more accessible entrances, and through the introduction of an elevator to the parish office/center structure and to the school. More abundant and thoughtful parking will benefit those who require extra assistance in accessing our campus.

Q: How are we addressing outdoor play space needs in Phase I?

A: Available outdoor space on our campus is less plentiful than we would like, as St. Francis Xavier is located in a completely developed area. Phase I of the Master Plan addresses the school’s more pressing classroom and safety needs. Additional and better-developed play spaces are a significant part of subsequent phases of the Master Plan.

Q: What is our strategy for meeting school space needs between now and the time that Phase I is implemented? Have we investigated portable classrooms?

A: The school is committed to providing an exceptional education to all of its students and is currently doing so despite our space constraints. This level of commitment will continue until a permanent solution is identified. SFX has utilized portable classrooms in the past to accommodate larger enrollments, and this solution could be part of construction phases if recommended by our builders during Phase I. However, there are no current plans to explore this option.

Q: Will the new courtyard windows installed last summer become a useful part of new construction in this area?

A: Windows in the courtyard were a necessary and immediate need to ensure the safety of our student learners seven days a week. The new Atrium will benefit from this recently upgraded amenity as modern windows create a much-needed sound barrier between the atrium and classroom areas.
Q: Will money from this campaign fund sex-abuse settlements?

A: No funds raised through this campaign will be used to defray costs related to the settlement of sex abuse cases. *To Teach Who Christ Is* serves educational needs within the Archdiocese, with an emphasis on the church’s ability to provide scholarships to those in need.

Q. Why do we need a cry room in the church? Won't this make young families feel unwelcome in the congregation during the liturgy?

A. Renovation in the church includes safety and accessibility upgrades, as well as the refurbishment of space on the second level adjacent to the altar. While currently noted in the plan as a “cry room,” this space may ultimately serve a number of purposes, including a meeting space for Children’s Liturgy of the Word, a religious education resource room, a community space accessible for post-mass fellowship, or overflow seating for peak liturgies such as Christmas and Easter.

The intention of our parish is not to create a sense among young families that they are no longer welcome to celebrate mass as part of the general congregation. SFX is fortunate to count many young families as part of its regular Sunday mass community; this is a noted and highly valued aspect of parish culture.

Q. Can large gifts be earmarked for specific elements of the Master Plan?

A. While our preference is for unrestricted gifts that meet the broader goals of the capital campaign, we gratefully accept significant gifts with the intention of funding specific portions of the Master Plan.