

# 4500FOREVER FINISHSTRONG

## Executive Summary – July 2016

### Overview

St. Thomas High School (STH) has launched **4500Forever**, a \$66 million capital campaign to expand and improve its facilities. This exciting and transformative campaign will not only fund the purchase of the adjoining 11 acre school property previously owned by the Houston Independent School District, but it will also support crucial redevelopment and improvements to academic programming, facilities and greenspaces on this new property as well as STH's existing Main Campus.

### History and Mission

Founded in 1900 by three Basilian Fathers, STH is the only all-boys Catholic college preparatory school located inside Houston's 610 Loop, and it is the oldest in the state of Texas. We serve 680 students from five counties and more than 120 zip codes across the greater Houston area. STH has one of the city's most diverse student populations: about 21% of the students are Hispanic, 7% are African American, 6% are Asian, 3% are multiracial, and 63% are Caucasian. 23% are non-Catholic. Approximately 30% of the students currently receive financial assistance to attend the school, with aid exceeding \$1.3 million annually.

### Today's STH Campus – and the Need to Grow

As Houston has grown over time, not only has the demand for a Catholic education grown but so have the demands on secondary education. A few years ago, STH embarked on the development of a new strategic plan to create a roadmap for the future. Specifically, the strategic plan addresses the projected Catholic population growth in Houston by allowing St. Thomas to increase its student body to approximately 1,000 students over the next ten years. Furthermore, it calls for outreach to lower socioeconomic middle school students to increase their understanding of St. Thomas as a realistic high school option.

The goal to expand enrollment has been hampered by facilities challenges, including the following:

- ❖ Insufficient space for science, math, and engineering classes.
- ❖ Insufficient indoor and outdoor athletic facilities (field space, gym and stadium space, locker rooms, training rooms, basketball courts, wrestling room, offices).
- ❖ Current sports scheduled as early as 6 a.m. and as late as 8:30 p.m. in order to rotate various freshman, junior varsity, and varsity teams.
- ❖ No fields or gym space available for intramural programs.
- ❖ Insufficient space for summer programs for middle school students that would generate revenue and attract potential future students.

### The Solution: Expanding and Improving the STH Campus

The school's leaders have long been searching for the right solution to meet immediate facility needs, as well as the need to grow for the future. They remained committed to keeping the school's central location, as it ensures that STH is accessible to young men from all across the vast, and continually growing, Houston area.

In 2013, HISD announced that it had decided not to renovate its existing High School for Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice (HSLEJ), located on 11 acres of land adjacent to the STH campus, and would sell the property. Presented with an ideal solution to address current and future needs, STH seized this opportunity of a lifetime and entered the bidding process.

The property offers 85,000 square feet of usable space, including a three-story main building, an auditorium, a gym, a natatorium, a cafeteria building, and several other classrooms, library, and storage buildings. Two acres are currently used as a softball field and amphitheater. This area will be redeveloped as the new Fr.

Wilson baseball field location, and the former baseball field space will be converted into two practice fields with an additional overlay of one regulation sized field.

### **4500Forever: A Campaign to Address the Future of St. Thomas High School**

The 4500Forever Capital Campaign was launched in November 2013, immediately after winning the bid to purchase the HISD property along the northern border of our campus. At that time, the campaign's goal was set at \$66 million. During our historic 14 month fundraising effort, it became clear that a two-phased master plan implementation and fundraising strategy would be necessary to achieve our ultimate goal.

In Phase I, our primary objective was to secure the property within the given timeline offered by HISD. With \$54 million raised, St. Thomas completed Phase I with the purchase of the land and buildings from HISD on December 15, 2014. This 11-acre tract is now known as the Jane and Bill Joplin Campus. At the time of the purchase, HISD also entered into an up to five-year lease agreement with STH in order to remain on the Joplin Campus as it completes construction by 2017 of its new High School for Law and Justice to be located near downtown.

Looking ahead to Phase II, the campaign will focus on several key objectives, namely the formation and execution of the new Master Plan for the combined campuses and the renovations necessary to optimize use of these new facilities. As in our original campaign budget estimates, the Phase II fundraising goal is \$12 million.

In creating the Master Plan for the expanded campus, three top priorities have been identified: create a much-needed Student Center; invest in STEM to ensure cutting-edge education; and relocate and enhance Fr. Wilson Field allowing for greenspace development to facilitate additional playing fields and support intramural programs. Additional instructional and facilities concerns will be addressed including connecting the two campuses, strategic renovations to buildings on the Joplin campus, instructional space reconfiguration on the Main campus, enhanced faculty-to-student ratios, and increased counseling and student services.

With the addition of the Joplin Campus, St. Thomas will be able to gradually and prudently manage enrollment growth up to 1,000 students over the next ten years. Even as we grow, STH remains committed to its mission and plans to continue to serve a diverse population, providing financial aid to approximately 30% of our students.

### **Conclusion**

Our successful major gifts strategy will continue to drive the fundraising effort. The campaign leadership will seek the support of the entire St. Thomas family – parents, alumni, and friends of the school. Every gift will matter, but success will be achieved with significant gifts from those who are able to make leadership contributions.

Our campus might be undergoing historic change, but the St. Thomas High School mission and vision will never change. On January 8, 1940 at the ground breaking ceremony for the new St. Thomas High School on Memorial Drive, Most Rev. Christopher E. Byrne, Bishop of Galveston, made the following observation that is every bit as true more than 74 years later:

*“The contribution this school will give cannot be calculated in dollars and cents.  
If these boys give back to themselves and through them, the community –  
this school will be of greater value than can ever be estimated.”*

Bishop C.E. Byrne at the ground breaking ceremony for St. Thomas High School on January 8, 1940

