



CATHOLIC
DIOCESE *of* RALEIGH

NORMS AND GUIDELINES
FOR DESIGN

MARCH 2023
OFFICE OF PROPERTY AND CONSTRUCTION

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NORMS AND GUIDELINES FOR DESIGN

These Norms and Guidelines are meant to supplement and clarify the *Diocese of Raleigh Planning and Construction Manual* and are intended to provide summary information for the use of the parish building committees and their architects.

1. NEW BUILDING CONSTRUCTION

- a. Architect:
 - i. All design issues related to new building construction are subject to review by the Diocesan Building and Real Estate Commission.
 - ii. The architect for the project may be chosen from among those recommended by the Diocesan Director of Property and Construction, from among local firms, or from outside the Diocese of Raleigh.
 - iii. The architect chosen for any new church construction is to be known for the design of traditional and timeless buildings which use classical architectural forms.
 - iv. The selection of the Architect for any new church construction must be reviewed with the Vicar General prior to selection and signing of the contract for the project.
- b. Liturgical Consultant (New Church Construction):
 - i. A Liturgical Consultant may also be chosen to assist the architect in the overall design work, as well as for the liturgical appointments, and should also be known for the design of traditional and timeless elements of classic form.
 - ii. The selection of the Liturgical Consultant (if applicable) must be reviewed with the Vicar General prior to selection and signing of the contract for the project.
 - iii. All new churches that come before the BRE Commission shall have liturgical design approvals by the Vicar General, prior to the BRE presentation.
- c. Programming Document (New Church Construction):
 - i. The Architect chosen for the project is to develop a Programming Document with the Parish Building Committee in order to guide the Concept Design for the church building. The document will state the intended architectural form of the building which should be complimentary to any existing building(s).
 - ii. Once developed with the Pastor or Pastoral Administrator, in collaboration with the Building Committee, the Concept Design is to be submitted by the Pastor or Pastoral Administrator to the Vicar General for review, prior to any publication of the design to the general faithful of the parish.
 - iii. Upon review of the Concept Design, written direction will be provided by the Diocesan Bishop and/or his delegate regarding approval or any next steps.

2. BUILDING ELEMENTS

- a. Acoustic:
 - i. The architect and acoustical engineer shall provide a design that minimizes acoustical disturbance in the nave and any other sensitive spaces due to HVAC equipment.
 - ii. Issues to consider are the location of both supply and return grilles, the velocity and volume of air in duct work, the location and mounting details of equipment, and other issues which may affect the acoustic environment of the nave.
- b. Classrooms:
 - i. Educational (CCD, etc.) classrooms shall be designed so as to allow conversion to single rooms to meet current NC-DPI guidelines for public school classroom size.
- c. Doors:
 - i. The front doors of the church, the entrance to the nave, and the space in front of the Sanctuary should be sufficient to accommodate a casket and catafalque.
- d. Interior View Panels:
 - i. With the exception of toilet facilities, all new construction shall be designed such that views are provided into all interior rooms and spaces large enough to accommodate an occupant through the use of glass view panels in doors, sidelights, or other equivalent means of visibility. Careful attention should be given to space planning to maximize lines of sight. For existing buildings, this policy will be implemented within the scope of future renovations which include new or replacement doors. (Reference: BRE Commission Meeting Minutes, November 17, 2021 & May 26, 2015).
- e. Elevator:
 - i. All buildings with two or more floors that are designed after September 2009 shall have an elevator regardless of any Code interpretation (Reference: BRE Commission Meeting Minutes, September 28, 2009).
- f. Materials:
 - i. In general, parishes are encouraged to use the highest quality materials in any new building. Life cycle cost factors and aesthetics should help set material selection priorities.
 - ii. A cement-based siding product is strongly recommended for use on new buildings over a vinyl or aluminum siding product.
 - iii. Prefinished metal siding such as that product which is standard to pre-engineered metal building packages is prohibited from use. This shall not prohibit the use of pre-engineered steel structural systems or metal roofing products.
- g. Pews:
 - i. All new churches shall have pews with kneelers installed.
 - ii. Any newly purchased existing buildings to be used for worship also shall have kneelers installed.

- iii. Existing churches without kneelers that undergo only minor renovations are not required to install kneelers during the renovation.
- h. Roof:
 - i. For new church buildings, a sloped roof appropriate to the architectural form outlined in the Programming Document is recommended.
- i. Seating:
 - i. Individual parish studies and demographics shall determine the number of seats, up to a maximum of 1,200, unless there is prior approval from the Diocesan Bishop.
 - ii. At the first presentation of a new church to the BRE Commission, the presenters shall show the capability of the church to be expanded in a practical manner in a future phase to accommodate an increase of at least 50% of the number of seats (i.e., a 500-seat church shall be able to be expanded to 750 seats). However, the maximum number of seats, including any planned expansion, cannot exceed 1,200 unless the Diocesan Bishop's approval is obtained prior to the BRE presentation.
 - iii. Expansion seating shall also be taken into account with a corresponding increase in parking spaces.
- j. Windows:
 - i. Attention should be paid to the placement of windows so as to reduce the possibility of sunlight shining directly into people's eyes during Mass or backlighting of the celebrant.
- k. Reconciliation Room
 - i. All new church reconciliation rooms should be modeled after the Cathedral reconciliation rooms, with full divider walls between penitent and priest, a moveable screen for face-to-face reconciliation, and an entrance/exit door from the priest's side that is different from the door used by the penitent. Fixed grill and sliding panel would be similar to that in the Cathedral.

3. SITE

- a. Cellular Equipment Leases:
 - i. Parishes are prohibited from leasing to cell phone companies for the purposes of erecting communications equipment.
- b. Crosswalks:
 - i. Where possible, school pedestrian crossing should not be located across the through-path of the main driveway.
- c. Dumpsters:
 - i. The locations of dumpsters and the route to them from the buildings should be given careful consideration.
- d. On-Site Retention Ponds:
 - i. Effective March 2003, all new projects on property with storm water retention ponds will be required to install a permanent fence.

- ii. The fence must be a minimum of 6’ in height with a locking gate.
- iii. The fence must be 20’ outside the crest of the berm. (Reference: BRE Minutes, March 24, 2003).

4. PARKING

- a. Number of Spaces:
 - i. The Diocese of Raleigh has determined that a realistic minimum ratio is 1 parking space per 2.5 seats versus the common municipal norm of 1:4. New Master Plans shall include parking facilities corresponding to the Diocesan Norm.
- b. Location:
 - i. In general, parking lots should not be placed toward the front of the present or future church. The site should generally have “curb appeal.”
- c. Accessible Parking:
 - i. The 2018 NC Building Code dictates that the handicap parking requirements are universal no matter where the project is located. In addition to the 2018 NC Building Code, local ordinances may increase the requirements and should be consulted with each project.
 - ii. Accessible parking spaces shall be as close as possible to the main entrance of the building. Each project is different, but the BRE Commission shall evaluate each scenario and approve of the accessible parking proximity to the building entrance.
 - iii. If the distance is greater than 100’, covered walkways on an accessible path shall be considered to access the main entrance of the building
 - iv. The accessible path shall not be different from the common path of entrance into the building.
 - v. All accessible parking spaces shall be located on the curb side of parking adjacent to building entrances.
 - vi. In order to provide for an adequate number of handicap accessible parking spaces for the parish population, parishes are strongly encouraged to follow the Diocesan recommendations in the table below:

Total parking spaces provided	Required minimum # of accessible spaces	Recommended # of accessible spaces for parishes where Self-Study or demographics show need for increase
1 to 25	1	4
26 to 50	2	6
51 to 75	3	8
76 to 100	4	10
101 to 150	5	12
151 to 200	6	12
201 to 300	7	14
301 to 400	8	16

401 to 500	9	18
501 to 1,000	2% of total	3.5% of total
1,001 and over	20, plus one for each 100, or fraction thereof, over 1,000	35, plus one for each 100, or fraction thereof, over 1,000

5. DOCUMENTS

- a. Contract:
 - i. The separation of a single project into several different contracts (i.e., site contract, building contract, etc.) shall be prohibited (Reference: BRE Commission Meeting Minutes, August 28, 1995).
- b. Master Plan:
 - i. Proposed new Master Plan plus any older Master Plans that were presented in the past.
 - ii. Must also include any permitting, code issues, and a sub-soil report, if applicable.
- c. Schematics:
 - i. All Schematics should include a site plan, floor plans, exterior elevations, and primary building section(s).
 - ii. For more complicated buildings and churches, wall section(s) and/or a roof plan may be necessary.
- d. Design Development:
 - i. Same as Schematics but with a higher level of detail.
 - ii. For more complicated buildings and churches, a reflected ceiling plan may be necessary.
 - iii. Must include, if applicable, outline specs, cost estimation information, sub-soil report, preliminary interior and exterior finish schedules, preliminary site utility plans, and preliminary structural and mechanical plans.
- e. Drawings:
 - i. Any drawings (sized 11" x 17") that are to be presented to the BRE Commission must be received by the BRE members no later than 5 days prior to the meeting.
- f. Programming Document:
 - i. See New Church Construction.
- g. Sustainability Plan
 - i. Every parish shall include a Sustainability Plan for its proposed project.
 - ii. It is not the intent of this Plan for a parish to be required to pursue LEED certification or the certification of any green building organization, but rather to employ sustainable practices that are available and applicable to the project at hand. It is understood that any project may have constraints that limit its green potential, and this should be discussed during the early phases of design by the designer.
 - iii. The project architect will be the primary resource for evaluating these

possibilities. The Diocesan Director of Property and Construction has various reference materials that may be helpful and can provide those items upon request.

- iv. The parish must include its Sustainability Plan at both the Schematic and Design Development presentations with detail applicable to the phase.
- h. Security Plan
 - i. Every parish shall include a Security Plan for its proposed project at both the Schematic and Design Development presentations with detail applicable to the phase.
 - ii. The Diocesan Director of Property and Construction has reference materials that may be helpful and can provide those items upon request.

6. LITURGICAL ASPECTS

- a. Altar:
 - i. The altar shall be sized proportionally to the interior space of the church and shall be fixed to the floor.
 - ii. The altar shall be rectangular in shape and fabricated from stone or marble. See paragraphs 918 – 921 in the *Ceremonial* for further detail.
 - iii. It is fitting that a relic(s) be included in accord with current church legislation.
- b. Ambo:
 - i. The ambo shall be prominent and complimentary to the altar in design and materials.
 - ii. It is of higher importance than the lectern but shall not be more imposing than the altar.
 - iii. The lectern, such as may be used by the Cantor or for announcements, shall be located outside of the Sanctuary proper.
- c. Baptismal Font:
 - i. Permanent Installation: In any newly built church, the clear preference of the Church for the celebration of the Sacrament of Baptism by immersion of infants and the pouring of water over the entire body of an adult, needs to be given serious consideration in the design of the font. It is therefore necessary that the proper plumbing be prepared at the time of construction as well as the necessary space for the font and the activities that will surround it. The font may be located at the entrance to the nave or in the midst of the community in the nave or near the altar. Where it is located should facilitate the active participation of the whole community in the celebration of the sacrament, especially at the Easter Vigil.
 - ii. Non-Permanent Installation: The Baptismal Font in a building which is not the permanent church should also provide for the immersion of infants and the pouring of water over the entire body of the adult. It is therefore necessary that the proper plumbing be provided at the time of construction as well as the necessary space for the Font and the activities that will

surround it. The font may be located at the entrance to the liturgical space or in the midst of the community or near the altar. Wherever it is located, it should facilitate the active participation of the whole community in the celebration of the sacrament, especially at the Easter Vigil.

- iii. The font should always be kept clean and the water it contains be kept fresh as a sign that the Sacrament of Baptism is the source of the beginning of new Life in Christ. Plants may be kept near the font as a sign of life. Ideally, the font should serve as a place where all the faithful, gathering as the assembly, recalls their baptism as they enter, serving as the primary source for baptismal water, over other holy water fonts throughout the church.
 - iv. While the type of font and its location in the nave are important to our celebration of the Sacrament of Baptism, proper liturgical formation is required for the faithful to fully embrace the full meaning and mystery of their baptismal commitment.
- d. Columbarium:
- i. A Concept Design for the columbarium, including its location on the parish Master Plan, must be submitted to the Vicar General for review prior to any publication of these designs to the faithful of the parish.
 - ii. Upon review, written direction will be provided by the Diocesan Bishop and/or his delegate regarding approval or any further steps.
 - iii. For further detail, see *Diocese of Raleigh General Norms for the Celebration of Roman Catholic Funerals*, paragraphs 28-35.
- e. Crucifix:
- i. The crucifix, by definition, shall include a corpus of Our Crucified Lord and shall be easily visible to the faithful in the assembly by being sized proportionally to the interior space of the church.
 - ii. The crucifix shall also have the option of being wall mounted or suspended.
- f. Holy Eucharist:
- i. As the Real Presence of Christ, truly present in the Holy Eucharist, the Blessed Sacrament is reserved in the tabernacle located in the sanctuary of the church building, directly behind the altar of sacrifice, such that it is truly noble, prominent, readily visible, beautifully decorated, suitable for prayer, and sufficiently elevated.
 - ii. The tabernacle is therefore not to be located behind where the assembly is seated in the nave.
 - iii. Care is also to be taken not to place the chair of the principal celebrant in front of the tabernacle or in any such fashion that will obscure the tabernacle from the assembly.
 - iv. Permission from the Diocesan Bishop for the tabernacle to be located in a chapel for daily Mass will be given if the reservation of the Holy Eucharist can also be maintained in the main church building according to the stated norms.
 - v. For those parishes where the Sacred Liturgy is celebrated in a multi-purpose building, a chapel for the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament is

to be constructed in such a way that the tabernacle is truly noble, prominent, readily visible, beautifully decorated, suitable for prayer, and sufficiently elevated. Given the dignity of the sacrament, the multi-purpose character of the building, and the need to maintain a place for private prayer before the Lord, the chapel should also be such that it can be easily separated from social functions and other non-liturgical activities.

- vi. A lamp, fueled by oil or wax, is to be readily visible, located near the tabernacle and kept alight so as to easily direct the attention of the faithful toward the reserved Real Presence of Christ as they enter the nave of the church building.
 - vii. The tabernacle is to be immovable, not transparent, constructed in such a way that it is inviolable, and securely locked so as to prevent profanation of the Reserved Sacrament.
 - viii. Parish church buildings in the Diocese of Raleigh, whether new or existing construction, are to be adapted to reflect the norms in paragraph 106 in *General Norms of the Sacred Liturgy of the Mass*.¹ If adaptations are required, proposals are to be submitted to Diocesan Bishop for review and approval prior to implementation.
- g. Other Adornments:
- i. In addition to the general guidance provided in this manual, specific design for all liturgical appointments listed, as well as all sanctuary furniture, candlesticks, statues, all sacred images, and all sacred art are to be proposed and submitted to the Vicar General for review prior to any publication of these designs to the faithful of the parish.
 - ii. Upon review, written direction will be provided by the Diocesan Bishop and/or his delegate regarding approval or any next steps.
- h. Parochial Liturgical Formation:
- i. Liturgical formation is encouraged for the faithful in parishes.
 - ii. Among the formation topics, the following are recommended:
 - 1. The significance of the Eucharist in the life of a Catholic
 - 2. The Eucharist and the Paschal Mystery

¹ *General Norms of the Sacred Liturgy of the Mass*, Paragraph 106: “As the Real Presence of Christ, truly present in the Holy Eucharist, the Blessed Sacrament is reserved in the tabernacle located in or near the sanctuary of the church building such that is truly noble, prominent, readily visible, beautifully decorated, suitable for prayer, and sufficiently elevated. The tabernacle is therefore not to be located behind where the assembly is seated in the nave. Care is also to be taken not to place the chair of the principal celebrant in front of the tabernacle or in any such fashion that will obscure the tabernacle from the assembly.

Permission for the tabernacle to be located in a chapel for daily Mass will be given if the reservation of the Holy Eucharist can also be maintained in the main church building according to the stated norms. For those parishes where the Sacred Liturgy is celebrated in a multi-purpose building, a chapel for the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament is to be constructed in such a way that the tabernacle is as stated above, truly noble, prominent, readily visible, beautifully decorated, suitable for prayer, and sufficiently elevated. Given the dignity of the sacrament, the multi-purpose character of the building, and the need to maintain a place for private prayer before the Lord, the chapel should also be such that it can be easily separated from social functions and other non-liturgical activities.”

3. The Real Presence in the Eucharist and the Mass
 4. Reservation of the Blessed Sacrament
 5. The right disposition of the faithful before Mass
 6. Active participation during Mass
 7. Liturgical ministries
 8. Posture during Mass
 9. Purification of sacred vessels
 10. Sacred images and devotions in Roman Catholic worship
- i. Sacred Images:
 - i. A cross adorned with the image of the crucified Lord is to be visible before, during, and after the Sacred Liturgy (see also 6.e: Crucifix above).
 - ii. It is to be located on or near the altar as a sign of the connection to the saving Passion of the Lord.
 - iii. This image should be clearly visible and sufficient in size to be clearly distinguishable to all in the assembly as the Crucified Lord.
 - iv. If a cross with an image of the crucified Lord is carried in a procession, this image is not to remain in the sanctuary during the Sacred Liturgy so as to avoid competition with the permanent image of the crucified Lord.
 - v. As the Sacred Liturgy is a participation in the heavenly Liturgy, the Church recognizes the importance of images of saints.
 - vi. Images of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Saint Joseph, the parish patron(ess), and others associated with local custom should be displayed, but not so as to distract attention from the focus of the Sacred Liturgy.
 - vii. Generally, there is only to be one image of a saint. Local custom and devotion may lend itself to additional images, especially with regard to the Blessed Virgin Mary.
 - j. Sacristy:
 - i. The Sacristy shall have options for separate rooms for vesting for priests, vesting for servers, and a working Sacristy, but shall include a *sacrarium*, secure storage cabinets for the sacred vessels, storage cabinets for other liturgical supplies, a vestment table, adequate storage for vestments, and a standard sink for washing of the sacred vessels.
 - ii. The square footage of the floor area should be of ample size, proportionate to the size of the respective church.
 - iii. All Sacristies in new church construction should be a minimum of 8' x 10' in floor area, although larger churches should consider a larger area in proportion to the size of the building.
 - iv. The Sacristy area shall also include an ADA accessible toilet, directly adjacent, for the exclusive use of the priest celebrant.
 - k. Sanctuary Platform:
 - i. The sanctuary platform on which the altar, ambo, and presider's chair are situated (the sanctuary) should be no smaller than 18' wide x 22' deep, should be ADA accessible, and must be reviewed by the Vicar General.
 - ii. Height of the sanctuary platform/number of risers shall be determined by the sight line design studies from the nave. Step design shall follow the

code formula for exit step proportions (i.e., 2 risers plus 1 tread = between 24” – 25”).

- l. Worship Space:
 - i. Worship space in new building must always be in a dedicated space used solely for worship rather than for a multi-purpose use.
- m. Alteration/Renovation of the Sanctuary or Nave:
 - i. A general written description of any proposed renovations is to be submitted by the Pastor or Pastoral Administrator for review by the Vicar General prior to:
 1. Any major alteration of the existing sanctuary or nave
 2. The hiring of an architect and/or liturgical consultant
 3. The publication of such proposed alterations to the general faithful of the parish
 - ii. This general proposal is to include the name of any architect or liturgical consultant being considered for the alteration/renovation work, along with a listing of their previous work.
 - iii. Alteration/renovations may include item such as the following: the location of the reserved Blessed Sacrament, and any re-configuration of the ambo, altar, presidential chair, or sacred images.
 - iv. Upon review of the proposal, written direction will be provided by the Diocesan Bishop and/or his delegate regarding approval or any next steps.

7. MUSIC GUIDELINES

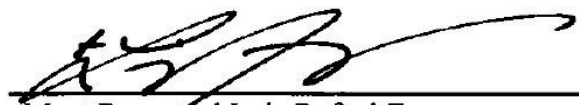
- a. Liturgical Programming Plan:
 - i. When studying the overall programming elements for a new church building, the renovation of an existing church building, a new multi-purpose building, or the renovation of an existing multi-purpose building, a Liturgical Music Programming Plan is to be developed.
 - ii. This plan will specifically address programming for the liturgical instrumentation that is to be provided for the celebration of the sacred liturgy.
 - iii. Those developing this plan should refer to the USCCB document, *Sing to the Lord*, for general guiding principles.
 - iv. The Plan is to be submitted to the Vicar General for review, with a copy also sent to the Diocesan Director for the Office of Divine Worship.
- b. Liturgical Programming Elements:
 - i. Preference for Organ: First among instruments used for the Sacred Liturgy is the organ. The Programming Plan is to demonstrate this priority, state the type of instrument, the placement of the organ console, a study on the appropriate acoustic placement of the associated pipes and/or speakers, and any provision for the enclosure of the organ pipes in a climate-controlled space.
 - ii. Piano: The Plan should include the type of piano instrument (i.e., Spinet)

- as well as its placement.
- iii. Choir/Cantor/Psalmist: The Plan should include placement of the choir, the Lectern, and the availability of the Cantor or Psalmist to the Ambo to lead the assembly in the prayer of the Psalm.
 - iv. Other Instrumentation: Programming for the use of other instrumentation that may be used during the Sacred Liturgy, to include strings, woodwinds, brass instruments, and the use of hand bells.


For further detail and/or reference for any of the above topics, see *Planning & Construction Manual, Building & Real Estate Commission Meeting Minutes, State of North Carolina Building Code, Ceremonial, General Norms for the Celebration of Roman Catholic Funerals, General Norms for the Celebration of the Sacred Liturgy of the Mass, and Sing to the Lord*. The Office of Property and Construction and the Vicar General may also be contacted for assistance.

This document is promulgated by the Most Reverend Luis Rafael Zarama, Bishop of Raleigh, and effective immediately in the Diocese of Raleigh. All particular law or any other practices introduced with the passage of time contrary to these guidelines is abrogated with this promulgation.

Given on March 9, 2023 at the Offices of the Diocesan Chancery



Most Reverend Luis Rafael Zarama .
Bishop of Raleigh



Luis O. Capacetti, JCL
Chancellor