

CRE Consulting Corps: *Making a Difference in South Carolina*

It is really quite extraordinary the commitment The Counselors of Real Estate, and in particular our team, has for assisting organizations in need of some outside-the-box and some non-outside-the-box thinking from true experts. What a great way to give back in such a meaningful way.

-John L. Barker, Chief Financial Officer, Diocese of Charleston



CLIENT: The Catholic Diocese of Charleston comprises the entire state of South Carolina with the bishop residing in Charleston. Founded in 1820, it is one of the oldest Catholic dioceses in the United States. More than 186,000 of South Carolina's citizens are Catholic (approximately 3.94% of its population). The Diocese has 94 parishes, 21 missions and one pastoral center. It extends over a vast geographic area and owns real estate assets located throughout the state. It is in good financial condition and not under any duress to sell assets. Recently, ground was broken for a new diocesan pastoral center, which will include a chancery, chapel and conference center. The new center will cost about \$18 million; the sale of excess properties will cover some of the costs.

CHALLENGE: Population of the Diocese has been growing over past years and is projected to continue to expand in the foreseeable future. The Diocesan leadership recognizes the need to develop a strategic and tactical plan to determine which existing parishes and facilities to expand and where to establish new parish facilities. In most cases, development of new facilities will require land acquisition, zoning and entitlement review, environmental assessment, land use planning, negotiations with brokers and sellers, etc. Leadership recognized the need for a framework to insure optimal acquisition, disposition, and management of its properties. Additionally, they recognized they did not possess the skill sets required to initiate a long-term development plan for the diocese. Fortunately, the Diocese realized that the way things have been done in the past is **not** the blue print for the future.



ASSESSMENT: In February 2014, the five-member Consulting Corps team assembled in Charleston for five days. As the project work evolved during the site visit, the team conducted interviews with the Bishop, the CFO, major stakeholders, and a number of key staff members. The team thoroughly reviewed and analyzed geographic, demographic, financial, and property data provided by the Diocese and acquired through other sources. The team then conducted an analysis of existing conditions and current reality using SWOT methodology (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats). To set a clear direction, the Consulting Team developed the following

Vision Statement for this process: *To manage growth and allocate resources to enhance and sustain a vibrant Diocese.*

RECOMMENDATIONS: A key recommendation was establishment of an interdisciplinary and fully professional Diocesan Real Estate Department that would serve the entire Diocese. The report outlined the required staffing for such a department, its policies and procedures, and the division of responsibilities. To maximize existing assets, the group recommended creation of a property data file to organize and consolidate information for all assets in the Diocese, followed by development of an asset and risk management plan for each property and a business plan for the entire portfolio.



The team pushed the boundaries of its assignment and offered comment on issues observed during the course of their work. Their “big, bold ideas” are being reviewed.

The Team was wonderful and it was a pleasure to meet and have the opportunity to collaborate with such an impressive, creative and talented group of professionals, all of whom I look forward to working with again in the future.”

- Team Member Kathleen Rose, CRE



TEAM: The team was led by **Casey R. Kemper, CRE**, Collegiate Asset Management, New York City. Panelists were: **Alan C. Billingsley, CRE**, Billingsley Investments, San Francisco; **William Norton, CRE**, Norton Asset Management, Inc., Manchester, N.H.; **William P.J. McCarthy, CRE**, W.P.J. McCarthy and Company, Ltd., Burnaby, British Columbia; and **Kathleen Rose, CRE**, Rose and Associates Southeast, Inc., Davidson, N.C. Special

thanks to **Angela E. Dugick, CRE**, Dugick Consulting LLC, Tega Cay, S.C. who introduced the Consulting Corps to the Diocese of Charleston.

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Please take a few minutes to think about how the expertise of your fellow Counselors, combined with their strong desire to give back, could benefit a not-for-profit organization, an educational institution or a municipal agency in your community. Send your suggestions to the CRE Consulting Corps, 430 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60611 (phone 312-329-8431; email shaack@cre.org).