

Plymouth Church Seattle

ENVISIONING A FUTURE PHYSICAL PRESENCE FOR THE CHURCH

Summary of document purpose

Like many church congregations chartered in metropolitan centers, Plymouth Church Seattle finds itself the stewards of an asset endowed by generations past: its physical real-estate in a high value urban center, with rising costs of ownership and increasing potential for re-imagining and development. Plymouth seeks a development partnership with an organization that will bring insight and knowledge of real-estate development opportunities, market trends, creative approaches to using space in a downtown location, and opportunities for creating long-term financial benefit from defining a real estate development opportunity in the market.

This document is intended to guide potential partners into an understanding of what Plymouth values and would prioritize in selecting a partner. It is not a document that asserts any expertise about the Seattle real-estate market or other factors that we expect development partners will be more adept at uncovering than we. It is meant to offer insights about our beliefs, values and imperatives when considering the possible partnerships we could enter into. We hope this will help you in honing your proposal and addressing your ideas and approach to mesh with our vision.

The contents here are meant to create a complementary partnership between your expertise and our vision and priorities - you bring the real-estate development acumen, we bring the outcomes and impact we hope this partnership realizes.

We see three primary pillars at work in our considerations, which have tensions between them, and which must be balanced for us to feel that our development approach will succeed:

- 1. How do we continue to serve our congregation?**
- 2. How do we serve and integrate into our local community?**
- 3. How do we transform the asset into an enduring financial instrument that amplifies the impact we can have on the world by enabling us to activate a broader set of missions for generations to come?**

The balance of this document will delve into each of these areas in turn.

How do we continue to serve our congregation?

‘Thinking of new ways to express God’s spirit including past wisdom and growing toward new ideas, broader traditions and a wider, living community.’ (member quote)

The existing Sanctuary was invested in and designed as a worship and music performance space. A center of both our worship and our distinct music footprint in the community is a unique pipe organ that is of substantial value to many members of the congregation. It is important that we continue to have a place of sacred worship in our site. We believe in exploring the preservation of aspects of the current Sanctuary in whatever new space we create, reflecting our respect for the air and sky, honoring the many who worshipped in that space before us, and strike a contrast with the surrounding commercialization of hotels, office buildings, convention center, etc. We are interested in a breadth of

approaches to this, and believe that anything that exists today can be altered or reimagined, but finding ways to elevate the most meaningful attributes and keep those as a part of our congregational cohesion and connections to our past will be welcomed. It is also imperative that we address the acoustic deficiencies especially with spoken word clarity with the current space and not let preservation of nostalgic architectural details impede these improvements. We know reconciling these imperatives is a hard challenge. It will require creativity on the part of our partner, and a willingness to face change and work through emotional burdens on the part of the congregation. We believe helping the congregation through this change is part of the job of this committee and the Council together.

We will also need to address the deficiencies of the aging building and create improvements that enable continued efficient church operations including facilities for large congregational social and governance gatherings (like Hildebrand Hall, and the lounge), offices for ministers, classrooms, kitchens and the library. Basic accommodations like elevator service to the whole of the building and parking facility will also have to be included.

How do we serve and integrate into our local community?

It is imperative first and foremost that we approach this project with a recognition and public acknowledgement that Plymouth Church's buildings (i.e., the Sanctuary and "the aging building,") are located on the traditional land of the Duwamish and Coast Salish Peoples; we will hold ourselves accountable to consult with their representatives about our plans and seek to assure appropriate recognition of that fact.

Other things that could be part of the end state would include space for uses that we cannot now accommodate in the aging building – offices for community-focused groups like Plymouth Healing Communities (currently using a third-floor classroom), Church Council of Greater Seattle, etc.

Additionally, as we wrestle with what to preserve and what to re-imagine, we recognize there is a spirituality in art and architecture that signifies ideas that come to life in this unique way, and that is what we want to save about our space, informed by the legacy that inspires and connects to the future. Architecture and the decisions we make about the physical space we develop will be an important contributor to the community. We want to be mindful of connecting the future and the past, the history and the evolving dynamics with the approach we take to this building.

Finally, we have a history of missions to serve the downtown population of citizens experiencing homelessness and we will value creative use of the re-imagined space to provide services like showers, fitness opportunities, education and training, healthcare, and shelter for these friends.

We envision the space itself being a source of equitable affordable housing that goes beyond providing shelter and paves a path to permanent housing for this community.

How do we transform the asset into an enduring financial instrument that amplifies the impact we can have on the world by enabling us to activate a broader set of missions for generations to come?

In leveraging the footprint we own in downtown Seattle we expect that there is potential financial upside which we hope can create a new endowment of sorts that we can gift future generations with, much as our predecessors endowed us with this land and building. It is up to us to make decisions now to give future generations opportunity to activate and realize what is important to them - we do not

believe we should legislate to future generations what their priorities and missions should be, but we have the opportunity now to make a set of decisions that will have multi-generational echoes in the form of financial tools that will give them the chance to have outsized impact on the world in keeping with our values. This could come to life in the form of a venture fund for people who are making a difference to people in our community, but regardless of the structure, the importance of getting financial leverage that we can gift to the future is important in our decision.

We believe at the very least we should be able to create an outcome that will relieve us of the financial burden of building maintenance, and will help us sustain our mission and our presence in Seattle for generations, and will enable us ability to stop pouring tithing into the building but direct 100% into mission and operations. At the upper side, there may be opportunity to create new financial instruments that can fund expanded mission. We are open to an approach that creates significant up-front benefit or sustaining recurring revenue over time, or a hybrid.

The HOW is as important as the WHAT

It is important that we establish some guardrails about HOW we will approach this effort - The ends don't justify the means. There are things we wouldn't be comfortable with even if they maximize our financial upside.

- We expect to build with environmentally progressive techniques and materials. Strong LEED credentials and Zer-Waste practices are all things we deeply value. We also want to think beyond U.S.'s standards and consider where the world is going. Our aspiration is to raise the bar where we can on this front.
- We expect to create a facility that bridges, through progressive approaches to rent and cost structure the increasing divide between rich and poor in our city. We wish to deliver outsized benefit to those without means.
- We expect whichever development partner we work with to be justice and equity oriented, provide various opportunities to support and actively seek minorities and other underrepresented groups of people to participate and benefit from the work and the opportunities this project will create.
- Seattle was one of the original signatories to the charter for compassion, being the first city to be named a community of compassion. Plymouth can lead the way to remind our community of this legacy and of how it should inform how we prioritize creating services, spaces, and missions that operate with compassion for those in need. Some background on this initiative and how it has continued to flourish can be found here:
<https://charterforcompassion.org/seattle-wa>

This is a living document and will be adjusted along the way as things are defined and clarified