

QUESTIONS PERTAINING TO EXPLORATORY DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHURCH PROPERTY

Q1: Refresh my memory...How did we get here?

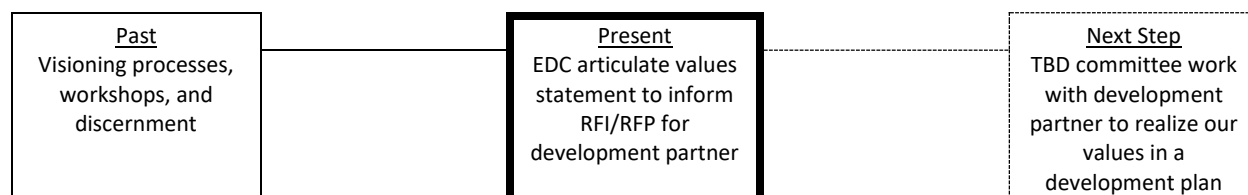
There are many things about our church building and spaces that work, not to mention – that we love! But our building is approaching a time when there is a lot of work that needs to be done. Several systems are out of date or just do not exist! Other systems are inefficient and consume greater amounts of energy compared to the systems available today. Some parts of the building would not meet current code requirements if built today. And still others are broken or in need of repeated repair or exhaustive maintenance.

In 1967 when the building was built, it served a congregation of over 1,200 members. Today Plymouth has about 400 members. Plymouth also served a Seattle that in many ways is different, if not unrecognizable, from the Seattle we know and experience today. We decided as a congregation it was the right time to explore options for a continued and reimagined physical presence at 6th and University with a potentially new relationship to the built environment and an envisioned relationship to the community.

Q2: Where are we in the process?

It is important to honor and appropriately place the current work of the Exploratory Development Committee (EDC) in the context of significant and on-going visioning work of the past decade. This exploration is not something new.

Most recently, in 2018, Plymouth, with the congregation's blessing, hired Meriwether Partners LLC www.meriwetherpartners.com to help Plymouth understand the development process. Meriwether produced a document which was shared with the congregation the same year. In 2020, the Congregational Council convened a committee to explore development options. The committee has met almost twice a month since last fall. The committee crafted a document that articulates Plymouth's values with respect to developing the property. This values document will inform Meriwether's RFI (request for information) from several potential development partners, and subsequent RFP (request for proposal) from potential development partners. The EDC is charged with making a recommendation for a development partner in September at which point the EDC will disband. A new committee will be formed to take the relationship with the development partner to the next phase. The charge for this next committee will likely be working with the development partner to co-create a viable development plan to realize our values in the built environment.



Q3: I'm glad you mentioned spaces we love. What is the fate of our remodeled (2015) sanctuary?

The short answer is we do not know. But there are three things we would like to say.

First, we hear and feel the love for our sanctuary. The sanctuary holds deep meaning for many. Some of us were baptized there. We memorialized many there. Some were married there. Most of us recited our covenantal vows of membership there. For some it was (and will be again!) a weekly place of comfort and challenge. For others, a place that literally saved our lives.

Second, let us put financial risks and rewards in their right place. We acknowledge the financial cost of the sanctuary remodel and the generosity it took to realize it AND we are called to be the best stewards of ALL our resources and the potential they hold now.

Third, let us balance our emotional perspective by considering the loss of other sacred spaces like the chapel and YF room. For some, the smaller space and order of worship in the chapel offered a unique intimacy and connection. For many youth, the YF room is/was their sanctuary. We know that the call was heard in that room for some of our youth to go into ministry. Broadening our perspective and compassion might soften our own position, whatever it is, to feel and realize our connectedness in our shared losses – and, let's remember, shared joys. We are a people that rightfully, appropriately, and meaningfully grieve losses and celebrate joys.

Q4: Shouldn't the church decide, before sending out a request for interest, whether or not we wish to retain the sanctuary?

We understand that the sanctuary is an important and sacred aspect of our current facility. The committee discerned and decided that prioritizing the retention of the sanctuary (and, therefore, seeking suggestions for building only on the other part of the site) would limit the range of options that may be generated by our "request for interest." Therefore, our proposed "request for interest" document, based on our vision statement, leaves open the question of retaining or replacing the sanctuary, while continuing to stress its importance. The University Temple United Methodist Church, in a "request for interest" that it circulated concerning the redevelopment of its site, took a similar approach. One option for which proposals were solicited was demolition only of the structure on the north portion of their site (about 45% of their property, by area) while preserving the sanctuary building; the other option was for development of the entire site. By adopting such a two-option approach, we hope to receive information that will enable the church to make the wisest decision going forward.

Q5: You make this sound like it is a done deal. Is it?

No, development is not a done deal because we do not know what the viable options are in response to the market and our values. Our development partner will help us with this. We will co-create them. The congregation will have a significant voice in this process by way of a vote to move forward or not.

Q6: Why not just remodel the existing building?

We encourage you to read [Joan Griswold's article](#) in the May 25th Herald.

There is no question that the trajectory for our building is one where continued increasing maintenance and repair will not be a viable fiscal option. So, what is to be done? How would a remodel serve the current congregation, the community, and future generations? What building and relationship to the community would be realized? And at what cost? A likely remodel would not just require reconfiguration of space and improved aesthetics but also include improvements to infrastructure such as plumbing, mechanical, electrical, low voltage, structural, and energy code related items (windows,

insulation, and moisture infiltration). Additionally, environmental quality issues such as indoor air ventilation would need to be addressed. Essentially, we would be getting a new current-Plymouth church. Is that what is needed? The exact cost of such a remodel is not known because the exact scope is not known but we can say, based on rough square foot costs, that it would be in the millions of dollars. Based on related experience and trends, the resources of the congregation are not great enough to support a fund-raising campaign to do such a project. And to draw from the endowment (if that were possible and did not exhaust it) or borrow against it would put the works of the endowment and the operating budget in jeopardy. Development (leveraging the increased value of the land and development opportunities) has the potential to realize new spaces (church and other), new relationships to a changed context and city, AND increase our financial assets to allow us to do more and other good works.

Q7: Is this what is meant by creative funding strategies for church operations?

Yes! One thought is to fund church operations from the value generated by developing the property. This might make us less dependent on pledges for operations and allow pledges to go directly to the mission and good works of the church.

Q8: Does Plymouth have to sell the property to realize any future value from development?

Maybe but no decision has been made and no conditions of sales related to development have been stipulated. The Meriwether report on pp. 36-39 describes four development options. The options presented by Meriwether were (1) do nothing, (2) sell the land to a developer, and in return receive a condominium type interest in a new sanctuary, social hall, office space, etc., (3) engage in a joint venture with a developer, wherein the land is Plymouth's contribution to the project and in return, Plymouth receives a condominium type interest in a new sanctuary, social hall, office space, etc., or (4) lease the church's land on a long-term (99-year) ground lease, with Plymouth receiving rent under an agreed formula and also receiving a condominium type interest in a new sanctuary, social hall, office space, etc. The committee will carefully evaluate the proposals received in an effort to assure that we recommend the wisest choice, but of course the final decision will rest with the congregation.

Q9: Is doing nothing, not developing, or doing something else still an option?

Development is not a given trajectory. It is enticing for what we think we know about it, but that train has not left the station. Our charge now is to explore viable development (as one possible trajectory) in alignment with our values. We will learn something in this process. Being informed is important. We will have decisions to make.

Q10: If things progress toward development, when might we realize a new church building?

According to Meriwether, the soonest we might occupy a new church building is the latter part of this decade. There are several steps between now and then. Working with the development partner to articulate a development plan is one mentioned already. Also, there is design, permitting, and construction.

Q11: If things progress, where would we worship?

Wow! Someone is a forward thinker of details! We do not know. Maybe a place like Town Hall but, really, who knows. This brings up equally important questions regarding the location of church operations, the proximity of church operations to our temporary worship space, parking, and access.

Q12: Who is on the Exploratory Development Committee?

The committee is co-chaired by Grace Lounsbury and Larry Fung. Larry stepped in for former co-chair Lori Kaid who had to step down for personal reasons. Other members of the committee are: Al Bentley, Alex Korahais, Don Bell, Joan Griswold, Melony Joyce, Pam Mitchell, Robert Neer, and Tom Maul.

Please reach out to us if you have any more questions.