



FUMC Facilities Strategic Planning, 2022 - 2023

Frequently Asked Questions

Prepared February 18, 2023

The purpose of this document is to provide answers to key questions raised by members of the FUMC community regarding the Facilities Strategic Planning project and FUMC's facilities. This document may be updated periodically with additional information, as is helpful to the community.

1. What is this "Facilities Strategic Planning" project?

FUMC is one church with two locations, a property in downtown Ann Arbor (Downtown) and another on Green Road near the University of Michigan's North Campus (Green Wood). Each building is an investment in time and resources. Before deciding future projects and renovations for each building, FUMC is undertaking a planning process to identify its collective future vision for our facilities. Because facilities investments are often 20-, 50-, or even 100-year investments, it is important to start by understanding, broadly, the FUMC community's opinions about future growth.

2. Who owns the two FUMC properties: Green Wood and Downtown?

FUMC owns the Green Wood property.

FUMC shares ownership of the Downtown property with The Wesley Foundation. The current division of land is along the northern edge of the Sanctuary, and runs from State Street through the parking lot. Currently, Wesley owns the northern $\frac{1}{3}$ of the property and FUMC owns the remaining $\frac{2}{3}$. On November 26, 1938 an agreement was signed by The Wesley Foundation at the University of Michigan and the First Methodist Episcopal Church of Ann Arbor (FUMC Ann Arbor today), to jointly construct a building. At the time of the building project, Wesley owned $\frac{2}{3}$ of the property (approximately to the southern edge of the current sanctuary) and FUMC owned the southern $\frac{1}{3}$ of the property. The Wesley Foundation conveyed land to FUMC to build the sanctuary portion of the building. The land transfer was noted as costing \$1.00. It was further noted that in the event that this combined property was sold for land value only, the proceeds of the sale shall be apportioned to the two entities according to their original holdings ($\frac{2}{3}$ Wesley, $\frac{1}{3}$ FUMC). If the property is sold for land value plus improvements, the proceeds shall be apportioned according to original land holdings plus any respective investment in the buildings. In other words, the property is a joint venture between the two parties, and any sales or redevelopment of the Downtown location would involve



conversation and agreement with The Wesley Foundation.

There are stipulations in the Book of Discipline regarding how proceeds from a sale of church property may be used. These stipulations apply to both Green Wood and Downtown. Generally, proceeds from property sales are restricted to capital investments in church property. Proceeds may be used for operating costs associated with congregation development as long as the proceeds are used as part of a conference-approved church redevelopment plan.

3. Why do people have the opinion that something needs to change regarding the facilities?

Worship attendance and giving has gone down steadily in recent years. Membership has declined from 1,163 in 2015 to 869 now, a 25% decrease. This reflects national trends, which are not expected to reverse without intervention. At the same time, short-term capital needs total more than \$1 million for repairs to the Downtown promenade and parking lot repair/replacement and boiler replacement at Green Wood. Other investments to ensure FUMC's facilities are welcoming and sustainable include insulation and an elevator at Green Wood, improved air handling Downtown, and the eventual replacement of the 80-year-old slate roof Downtown.

Staff are stretched thin maintaining and operating two buildings. Money invested in buildings is not available for investment in programs, and money invested in programs is not available for investment in buildings.

4. What has already been tried to grow FUMC participation in faith and in service?

In recent years, FUMC has tried a number of plans, projects and initiatives to grow participation. The focus in the past was primarily on "what" could be done or offered to attract new members. For example, worship times and styles were changed in an effort to appeal to new people. During the pandemic, FUMC quickly moved to digital, online, and live-streamed options to accommodate greater participation. The Adult Faith Formation Ministry also launched an Adult Small



Group program which attracted a large number of age-diverse participants. Despite efforts, FUMC engagement and giving has continued to decline, although at a slower pace than other mainline churches.

FUMC exists to fulfill God's call on our lives to play our part in building God's Kin-dom on earth. We seek new participants who want to grow with us as part of a loving and supportive community of Christ followers. This purpose undergirds our decisions about investments in programs and in buildings.

5. What have successful churches done that we can learn from?

Successful churches recognize that the place of the church in society has changed. Going to church is no longer something people automatically integrate into their lives, which means worship attendance has gone down steadily in all mainline denominations over the last few decades. Rather than wait for people to come to them, successful churches are intentionally reaching out to their communities through community events, service projects, and shared facilities. They modernize their buildings to create spaces that are warm and welcoming where people can gather before and after church. Finally, they find ways to utilize their facilities for multiple purposes and, potentially, as a source of income.

Some examples of churches that have successfully made these sorts of transitions include the Chicago Temple United Methodist Church (UMC), which is a highrise building with the church on the lower floors and rental office space above. Traverse City Central UMC added a larger narthex, gathering space, and welcome center. West Side UMC here in Ann Arbor did a similar renovation a few years ago. A church that Pastor Nancy will be visiting during her sabbatical is University Temple UMC in Seattle, WA, which has torn down their building to build a new facility that includes worship space with movable pews, student housing, a cafe, and an all-ages performance space. Pastor Nancy will also visit Glide Memorial Church in San Francisco, which plans to build a ten-story building next to the church to provide more space for congregational gatherings and services to the community.