

St. John's United Church – SPIRIT Place Development - How did we get to this point?

In The Beginning...

- The formal process started in 2005
- There was a desire for increased and more diverse programming
- Official Board recognized that our building was taking a greater proportion of our resources away from our programs
- There were concerns about our “green-ness” and the health of the building
- The Board established a “Futuring Team” to lead the strategic planning process and discern a path for the future

Futuring Team

- Engaged congregation through a variety of ways:
 - Appreciative Inquiry
 - Individual Interviews – over 100
 - World Café sessions
 - Theological Worlds Workshop
 - Generations Workshop
 - Wall of Wonder – history
 - Lunch and Learn Sessions
 - Demographic Research
 - Readings and other research
 - Dialogue with other churches across Canada

Five Themes Emerged

1. Welcoming/Friendly
 2. Worship
 3. Social Justice
 4. Music
 5. Teaching and Learning
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1. We are welcoming and friendly
 - Open, comforting, diversity, not stuffy, enthusiastic, accepting, connectedness, community, balance, family-centred, comfort in strife, fellowship, hopeful, inclusive, Affirming, progressive, opportunities to contribute, open to change
 2. Worship
 - Services, nourishing, diversity, variety, multi-generational, range from intellectually stimulating to too academic, challenging, broadening, sense of awe, comfort in rituals, real life, haven of support, promote Taize
 3. Social Justice
 - Opportunities to give, caring, pastoral care, outreach (Breakfast Program, St. Andrew's Suppers, Phoenix House...), M&S, progressive, link social justice to faith, elder care, diversity,

inclusive, force for change, do more with programs, build appreciation for others
(Guatemala project)

4. Music
 - Beauty of the music and rituals – faithful to Jesus’ teachings, living the Gospel, variety, uplifting, sense of awe
5. Teaching and Learning
 - Opportunities for all ages, variety, leadership, broadening, real life
 - Sunday School, Experiment in Practical Christianity and other CE programming
 - Want more...

Summary of Learnings

- Whatever form our future Church should take, we know that:
 - We are a welcoming, friendly and community based centre of spirituality for all families regardless of makeup, size or age
 - We value Social Justice and are heavily biased toward Social Action
- St. John’s welcomes families with children and provides a program for children to learn in a positive environment and Christian climate
- Our Church provides meaningful worship services where preaching, teaching and the ministry of music are responsive to the needs of the total congregation
- Church related activities, especially those that are multi-generational, should be encouraged and strengthened to foster a sense of family, community and fellowship
- Our congregation wants to remain together as a group of worshipers and a faith community of St. John’s
- We have many fond memories of this building; however,
- We realize that we must change some aspects of how we function if we are to remain vibrant and alive; therefore,
- We are prepared to look at alternate scenarios to remain a faith community.

By 2007, we decided to...

- Keep the congregation together as St. John’s.
- Do not seek amalgamation with another church(s) at this time
- Establish two subcommittees to explore how our vision and mission will take us into the future and what facilities we need to deliver on it
- Read a range of books, articles, research on church trends across North America; visits to and dialogue with some other churches (models in Toronto low income housing, Edmonton), explored “Acts”

Mission and Vision Subcommittee

- Provide a variety of options to help deepen people’s faith and their service in the world
- Promote and encourage holistic spiritual practice within our congregation and within our individual lives

- Focus on spiritual growth as opposed to growth in attendance as our congregational goal
- Assist in deepening the spiritual growth of committees and working groups at St. John's, particularly as a time of shift, disruption and transition approaches and be open to new ways of organizing this ministry
- Site design requirements and resources be guided by our desire for flexibility to respond to the Spirit and to nurturing Christian practices in all aspects of our community's life

Building Subcommittee: 3 R's

1. Retrofit
2. Relocate
3. Redevelop

Retrofit Existing Building

- Original church - 1917-18
- Expanded church - 1920
- Numerous studies have been done in the past
- 1992 – J. Cowie Engineering
- 1993 – Robert Parker and Associates (Ewart Engineering and CBCL Ltd.)
- 2007 – Fire Marshall
- 2007 – Clean Nova Scotia Energy Audit
- Some findings
 - Method of construction in the 1920's was improper in terms of the masonry – not properly made or installed to prevent moisture penetration and freeze-thaw damage
 - Additional concerns with original wiring, original heating, roof, windows and doors, insulation, plaster, lead paint, mold, asbestos...
 - The structure did not lend itself to a redesign/multi use - for enhanced programming to expand how we live our mission
 - Spending over a million dollars on an old building that does not support current/future programs was not good stewardship
 - Would still have a building that is too large, not very energy efficient and not configured to suit our needs and expensive to maintain
 - Who would pay for it anyway?

Relocate

- We explored the neighborhood for a possible alternate site to permanently Relocate and create a new home where St. John's could continue its mission, however:
 - We were limited by the need to stay proximate to our current location based on feedback and our research
 - Land and/or buildings that might be suitable were in short supply. We looked at other churches that are vacant or perhaps might soon be vacant, all to no avail. (Grant Thornton, Royal LePage, DTZ Barnicke)

Redevelop

- Continue to be a Social justice and outreach congregation; mission driven
- Hired Consultant to explore options and engage in market research
- Implementation Team established
- Continued dialogue within congregation and began dialogue with community – 4 open sessions and 2x 150 newsletters in 2008
- Decisions
 - Unanimous decision made by St. John’s with approval of church hierarchy to proceed with development of an Enriched Independent Living complex for seniors, in conjunction with a new church facility that supports our Mission
 - Not involving a Developer – NFP to fit with mission
 - Purchased “Church House”
 - Made decision to be good stewards and move out of the old space in January 2009
 - RFPs for Architect, Legal Advisor and Service partner
 - Surveys - hazardous materials, environmental assessment, topographical

S.P.I.R.I.T. Place

- S = Seniors – an environment that fills a gap in the community
- P = Public and community engagement in the project
- I = Inclusive and welcoming to all – an Affirming Complex
- R = Respect for the Earth – a “Green” Complex
- I = Intergenerational – a place where generations can interact
- T = Transforming – a new model for Church and Community

So here we are...

- Want neighborhood feedback on style/exterior of the building and on its role in the community – i.e., what community needs could be met by SPIRIT Place? Multi-use opps?
- Communication channel re construction
- We understand concerns about parking, traffic, density, height and we have relayed those to the architects and see efforts to take them into account already