

Assets & Possibilities

The Faithful Stewardship of United Church Property

The British Columbia Conference Property Development Council of The United Church of Canada

Introduction

For decades it has become clear that the United Church is “property rich, cash poor.” In more recent years numerous congregations have explored the possibility of utilizing their property assets in more productive ways, providing facilities for mission as well as financial assets for congregational life.

The task of assessing mission opportunities that might be enhanced by better using properties in alternative ways is a significant one. Even more difficult is the actual work of property development and redevelopment, sale, lease or other property use to achieve the discerned mission.

Numerous queries and requests have come to the Conference over the past two years for assistance in this new work. The Conference held two gatherings in the Lower Mainland to provide basic information to congregations, as well as assess the real need for additional assistance.

After over two years of conversations, the Conference through its Property Development Council (PDC) is now in a position to offer a new service to the congregations and ministries of BC Conference, working with them as partners in property assessment, planning and development, and divestiture.

Mandate

The mandate of this work is to provide a service that will be available, upon request, to congregations and ministries in BC Conference in the areas of property assessment, planning, development, redevelopment and divestiture. The service will be in the form of “people” and “money”. A team of qualified personnel with property development and project management skills will provide the level of leadership needed for projects, together with appropriate levels of funding associated with property ventures, on a case by case, negotiated, basis.

The Vision

Operating under the aegis of the PDC, Conference staff will partner with Colliers International to provide a small Property Resource Team, which will be available to work with Presbyteries, congregations and other ministries to look at property assets in the light of mission needs. The aim is to help assess and transform property value in ways that will enable and empower mission priorities. The Property Resource Team can provide leadership to both the discernment and development work from start to finish, or for identified pieces of that process.

The Property Resource Team will have the professional skills and experience necessary to “drive” a process, to keep it moving even when it encounters regulatory hang ups, governmental red tape or

other setbacks. The Team will find partners as needed or desirable (government agencies, for example) ensure all civil and church laws and procedures are appropriately followed, work with congregations on planning and making major decisions, and ensure the completion of the project.

This work will not override any responsibility belonging to Presbyteries, congregational boards or trustees – it is to provide them with a resource. Knowledgeable of church law and process, the Property Resource Team will ensure due diligence is undertaken in a faithful and efficient manner.

By providing such a resource, our hope is to focus efforts that have already been identified but are presently unfocused. The team can work with individual congregations and can also provide the kind of planning expertise that will enable regional planning to take place. Groups of congregations or a Presbytery might want to do property planning on a larger, more inclusive, scale, combining mission and assets to provide more imaginative and ambitious results.

It is anticipated that this work will become an important place of knowledge and experience regarding church property that can be called upon for anything from simple information to full scale development planning and management.

Cost Recovery

It is anticipated that this work will be cost-recoverable over the medium term, that is, over the life of several projects. Some large scale projects that have already been identified will net enough funds to recover all the associated costs while also providing additional funds to support important projects where there is little likelihood of full cost recovery.

Monies generated from this work will be used only for the continuation of this work and will not be used for other Conference or Presbytery work. It shall be accounted for separately from other Conference finances, within the books of the PDC.

Team Members

The Property Resource Team is made up of Terry Harrison, as an employee of BC Conference, and Colliers International, led by Justen Harcourt. Terry and Justen have already worked together for several years to successfully complete the \$11.8 million redevelopment of camps Fircom and Pringle for the Camp Future Project.

Timeline

This work shall begin immediately. Already several congregations and ministries are anticipating receiving this kind of assistance; conversations need to start right away to ensure momentum on existing projects is not diminished. It is anticipated that work in this area will be needed for at least the medium term as the church continues to change.