

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT VISION PROCESS

Why is the Board interested in addressing our space issues now?

The Board is responsible for ensuring that the congregation has appropriate space for current and future program needs as well as for being a good caretaker of that space. We will be facing some major repair and maintenance needs in the near future. The most immediate example is the roof over the sanctuary. Our first estimate indicates that to replace this roof properly will cost \$27,000. Is it prudent to spend this amount on a roof that may be destroyed in a renovation or left behind in a move in the next decade?

There is less crowding with two services. Why do we still need to think about changing our space?

Providing two services has eased our space crunch a bit on Sunday mornings. This is a temporary solution because the second service and its RE classes are growing already and because a second service does not increase the functionality or accessibility of our space. It is also important to note that the average time between a congregation deciding to change their space (through renovation or relocation) and occupying that space is 5-7 years. We should not be asking ourselves "Is our space OK for now?" We ought to be asking ourselves "Will our space be OK 7 years from now?"

Does the Board favor renovating or moving?

The Board has a responsibility to the congregation to remain neutral on this question. As individuals, trustees will have an opinion and are free to vote like everyone else. As a Board our job is to put aside our personal preference and to be sure congregation members have the information they need to make an informed decision. This is entirely feasible. Judges, for instance, must make decisions in abortion cases based on the law not on their personal feelings about abortion. An emergency room physician must treat a patient to the best of his/her ability even if the person is a drunk driver who injured others.

Has the entire Novak Group report been made available to the congregation?

The entire Novak group was made available to the entire congregation in the spring of 2002 preceding the vote in May. Architects from the group made two presentations of their work to the congregation. Everyone was invited and strongly encouraged to attend one of those meetings. The report was available at those presentations and at five subsequent open group meetings which everyone in the congregation was strongly urged to attend. Only a summary of the two plans was sent by mail to congregation members because of the length of the report (more than 30 pages). The Novak Group report will be with the Vision documents in the administrator's office. The Board will also contact the Novak Group to see if there is information that was not submitted in written form that is still available (such as a structural evaluation).

Why are the cost estimates for the renovation and new building so similar?

This was no coincidence. The Novak Group made the renovation plan based on the report they received from the Vision Team that summarized the space needs of the various programs in the congregation. They used the cost of the renovation, \$1.8 million, and estimated the square footage of new building you might be able to get for the same cost. It was decided not to pay for a new building design at that time because it would have cost thousands of dollars.

Was the Novak Group asked about doing a staged renovation?

The architect was indeed asked about doing a staged renovation. He said we could do such a renovation, but that it would likely result in substantial cost increases. The Vision Team therefore elected not to pay for a staged renovation plan in addition to the one-time plan because of the cost and because we could always resort to a staged renovation if we did not raise enough money for the entire renovation during the capital campaign.

Can we rent space in other nearby buildings to increase our space?

This option was considered. The space was very expensive and was not felt to solve our space issues in the long term because it isn't adjoining space. It was felt that congregation members would not want to cross the street in inclement weather and would not want children going back and forth across the street on a regular basis.

Has the Vision Team asked the society what their spaces needs are?

The Vision Team spent a substantial amount of time interviewing all committees and programs within UUSIC as well as many individual society members during the winter of 2000-2001. This extensive survey was used by the Vision Team and the Novak Design Group to plan the renovation. This document will be available in the administrator's office.

Should we find out how much money people are willing to give before we decide whether to renovate or build?

The Vision Team hired a consultant from the UUA named Martha Easter-Wells in the fall of 2000 to help it understand how congregations go through the process of deciding to increase or modify space. She clearly advised that congregations first decide in what direction they would like to move and only afterward conduct a feasibility study about fund-raising. Based on that initial study of how much money people might be willing to give the project is revised. A capital campaign follows. Finally, the congregation is asked to vote to commit to the project and work begins. There are many opportunities for revision and many votes at which the congregation is asked for its approval before a commitment to initiate a building project is made.

There are several reasons for having the vision first. One is that annual stewardship campaigns do not necessarily reflect what people can/will donate to a big project. Some of the big annual givers may be families with children who do not have savings to donate to a capital campaign. Some people on fixed income may not be able to give much each year, but they may have savings they are willing to leave as a legacy for something like a building or renovation project. Lastly, many people may prefer to renovate or to build,

but mostly they are committed to improved space so they may contribute to the campaign even if their project of choice is not selected.

Martha Easter-Wells information for the Vision Team will be available in the administrator's office.

Why was discussion limited at the May 2002 congregational meeting?

The issue arose because prior to the May 2002 meeting few members with children attended congregational meetings. Reasons cited included no childcare or productive children's activity and length of meetings being too great. This decision was considered so important to congregational life that it was necessary to be inclusive of as many members as possible. This meant having meaningful activity for the children and keeping the meeting fairly short.

The congregation was notified in advance by mailing that the meeting would begin at 10:45, discussion to begin at 10:50 and the vote would occur at 11:10. Children were to remain in RE classes during that time. Each person was limited to a one-minute comment and comments alternated between pro-renovation and pro-move viewpoints. There had been 5 congregation-wide meetings in April and May along with two presentations by Novak Group in April. There were forums and opportunities for congregation members to meet with each other and with Vision Team representatives throughout the winter of 2001-2002. It was felt that people had had many chances to have their questions answered and to express their opinions so the congregational meeting was primarily a vote.

167 members voted out of 277 members. 109 voted to further investigate a new building (65%). 58 voted to further investigate renovating our current building (35%). 60% of families with children in RE voted, the same percentage as the congregation as a whole. A majority of people indicated they could support either decision. The Board had decided not to proceed without a 2/3-majority decision.

The vote in May 2002 was good and bad. It was successful in that RE families voted in the same proportion as other members. This was the first time in over a decade that these families had felt empowered to vote in significant numbers. On the other hand it left some members feeling their voices were not heard. It is very difficult to meld the needs of people of different generations, people who are in different stages of life and have different demands on their time. The Board will review this process before any future vote on our space.