

Steps for a Successful Church Building Program

The following guidelines are presented to be a helpful checklist of recommended steps in developing a successful building program. Use them as a list of goals that help to develop your time schedule of events and an agenda of the tasks to be accomplished.

STEP ONE: LOOK FOR OUTSIDE HELP

Request help from your denomination's organizations, other churches that have recently been through a building program, and any other associations to which your church may belong. Obtain published books on guidelines for help in church facility planning.

STEP TWO: APPOINT A BUILDING OR PLANNING COMMITTEE

A building and / or planning committee should be formed to start a study to evaluate the ministry needs of the church for the ultimate goal of developing a Master Plan study. This committee needs to be an action committee with the ability to make decisions and to be able to hire an architect and consultants who will assist the committee in their efforts. (See guidelines for procedures for selecting a building or planning committee.)

STEP THREE: ANALYZE YOUR CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

Discover the potential needs and goals that might meet the current and projected ministries of your church. This is a time to discover "the mission of our church". The committee might want to survey the community to assess the expectations of potential members and to determine a possible number of persons who might be reached in a particular ministry program.

There are four categories basic to a successful ministry. They are "spiritual", "human", "financial", and "physical property". Each should contribute to the whole mission and not restrict or govern it. Use this time to gather information that will be helpful to your architect. Collect data on your ministries' goals and attendance to your services, including other major functions within the church.

Gather information on your existing facilities and property. If the church does not have a property survey, now is the time to hire a land surveyor to identify your property boundaries, buildings, utilities, parking areas, and topographical information. Our architects can assist you in a feasibility study and a needs analysis that will help define your ministry goals and potential.

STEP FOUR: SELECT YOUR ARCHITECT

This is an important step. Choose an architect who understands you and your church's ministries and an architect who has experience in designing church facilities. See the guidelines for "SELECTING AN ARCHITECT."

STEP FIVE: EVALUATE YOUR PROPERTY

Evaluate the adequacy of the existing church property for expansion possibilities. Your architect can assist you in providing general guidelines as to the amount of land needed for various types of facilities. If your existing property is not adequate and new land is needed, then see the guidelines for "PROPERTY SELECTION". Your architect can be an invaluable asset in helping you

to identify the potential for any property and its ability to meet your needs.

STEP SIX: DEVELOP A MASTER PLAN STUDY

A Master Plan is a study for the future growth for your church to reach its potential. This should include written ministry and facility surveys that are taken from the membership. This allows members to become a part of the process and eventually become a contributor to the financial needs of the construction. Your architect should assist you in this survey in order that the correct questions are asked.

Workshops and / or focus groups with the appropriate leadership in the church should be held to establish the goals and "wish list" that responds to the ministries of the church. From this "wish list", the architect can develop a site plan, master floor plan and a perspective study drawing that depicts the image of the new facility. These will become your tools to assist in fund raising efforts and to give the membership of the church a focus on the vision of the future for the church.

STEP SEVEN: PREPARE A FINANCIAL PLAN

- Review past and present financial performance.
- Make initial contact with sources of help regarding a fund-raising campaign. This might include the possibility of selling bonds by your membership.
- Project the amount of money that can be raised in a fund-raising campaign from your membership.
- Investigate sources for borrowing additional funds that might be needed and the potential amounts that would be available to the church.
- Determine the maximum funds which can be made available for a building project. This will allow you to establish a budget for your architect. (See the guidelines for the church to determining a BUDGET for the total expenses involved with a construction project.)
- Secure tentative loan commitments from selected mortgage lenders.

STEP EIGHT: MASTER PLAN PRESENTATION

The architect will assist the committee in presenting the Master Plan study to the congregation. This presentation should include the established program needs, proposed site development plans, immediate floor plan needs and planned future floor plan needs. The presentation should include related costs for the first phase of construction. Be prepared to discuss the possible means and sources of financing the project with an understanding that there are no numbers that are able to be definite at this point in the development of the project. The architect's Master Plan should include phased construction relating to the site and building development.

Secure the members' approval for the type and amount of space to be constructed. Obtain approval on any additional property required. Begin your fund raising process.

STEP NINE: DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION DRAWINGS

Give your architect approval to proceed with conceptual drawings of the Master Plan's first phase when the funding and budget for construction is finalized. The architect should provide a cost estimate for the construction based upon the development of the drawings.

Upon approval of the conceptual drawings and cost estimate, instruct the architect to proceed with design development drawings. This is the time to start thinking about hiring your contractor. Your contractor can give invaluable advice to you and your architect to insure the construction cost is within your budget.

Give the church members progress reports with updated plans and cost estimates. Review of the design development plans should include basic materials, electrical and mechanical systems, and other design issues before the architect prepares the final construction drawings.

Upon approval of the design drawings and a revised cost estimate, instruct the architect to complete the detailed construction drawings and specifications for your final review and approval. Give the church members a progress report when plans are completed and approved.

STEP TEN: START THE CONSTRUCTION

With the architect's advice, select the construction delivery method. This might include invited bidding, open bidding, negotiated bidding based upon a cost-plus a fee with a guaranteed maximum cost, or construction management. We highly recommend the negotiated bidding with a guaranteed maximum cost process for church facilities. This allows for potential savings, interactive owner input and a better construction process.

Review bids with your architect and discuss any questions that you may have. Upon approval of the bid price, the architect will prepare a contract between the church and the contractor. This is a good time for a press release for the local media. A discussion of "value engineering" items may be appropriate.

Establish a date for a ground breaking ceremony.

Arrange for any permanent financing and secure the construction loan.

Contact your insurance agent to add builder's risk insurance to your existing insurance policy. Have periodic meetings with your architect on the construction site to review the progress of the construction, to discuss any changes the church would like to make to the construction process, and to answer any questions that the church might have concerning the building.

Start making selection and delivery plans for any furnishings and equipment that the church will be purchasing. Coordinate the delivery time with the contractor.

STEP ELEVEN: THE BUILDING IS FINISHED

Meet with your architect to make a final inspection of the building and list all "punch list" items to be corrected. When completed, make final payment to the contractor and your architect. Make final arrangements with the loan company for permanent financing. Contact your insurance agent to secure appropriate insurance on the new building. Inspect furniture upon delivery. Make plans for a building dedication service. Present a final report to the church members from the building committee to address any final actions by the committee in order to terminate the need for the committee. Document in writing all decisions and actions made in a report for reference by future building committees.



Praise God for what He has done!

If you have any questions concerning this article or feel you need additional assistance with your building plans, please contact us to schedule a free consultation meeting. We would enjoy meeting with you to answer your questions and to share the ways we can help your committee in order to make your building program a success.