

Q and A's from BOF/BO forum

Questions from the Sept. 14, 2022 forum

Q. Can a simple decision tree be shown that shows major pluses and minuses for various options?

A. Comparative costs and pluses and minuses will be shown and discussed at the various forums. These will be summarized on the web pages prior to the vote. Ultimately, each congregant will need to bring their own subjective viewpoints to the pluses and minuses.

Q. We need to engage young members and their families – they will benefit most from whatever we do. What can be done in that regard?

A. Amy Nelson has scheduled a session specifically for parents of children and youth for 10 a.m. Dec. 3 to discuss these issues. Each church member will have one vote in the upcoming vote regarding our future. Youth (age 16 year or older) may choose to become members, and be able to cast a vote, if they join at least 60 days prior a scheduled vote. For our first vote in January, a youth would need to join by Nov. 30. Younger youth are encouraged actively participate in our planning and discussion, and to express their views with voting household members.

Q. What are our needs vs. our wants?

A. At a high level, meeting our building needs allows us to serve our church's mission. Also, please see the long "Congregational wish-list" document posted under the Congregational Input area of the website (<https://uurochmn.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Building-Program-Statement-2021-09-22.pdf>).

Q. Can you make more data available online, not just at forums?

A. Please see the Building Our Future (<https://uurochmn.org/buildingourfuture/>) web pages, on which there is a lot of data. More data will be added leading up to the vote as appropriate based on what is presented at the forums and what is learned by BOF/BO team.

Q. Do you intend to do another survey of building questions? (A congregational survey was done early in this discernment process.)

A. The 2019 survey served as a benchmark and indicated that a strong majority of congregants were open to the idea of moving to another location. At this point, the forums will serve as the main vehicle for public input between now and the January 2023 vote. The vote itself is essentially a survey on our intention as a congregation.

Q. Are we going to have additional sessions so that we can talk with one another about building issues?

A. Every forum that we've had pre- and post-COVID provided opportunities for questions and discussion by the congregants attending the forums. The Dec. 14 forum will specifically accommodate small group discussions, and this may be an element of other activities before future voting.

Q. Regarding goals and visions for our congregation, how does what we may do in this building process serve that?

A. Please see document on the web pages titled “Mission Statement,” which captures what we as a congregation are trying to do whether we opt to stay on our current site or go to a different location (<https://uurochmn.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Building-Our-Future-Core-Values.pdf>).

Q. How does our current building limit us in serving our mission?

A. Please see “Drawings Showing Building Issues” on the website (<https://uurochmn.org/building-consultation/>). This topic will be the focus of the Oct. 30 forum. The drawing will also be posted throughout the church for review, commentary and discussion before that event, and probably remain in place until voting begins in January.

Q. Do we anticipate that our congregation size will increase in the future?

A. Moving into a larger space, including sanctuary (whether on-site or at a new location) will allow growth in our congregation. UUA consultant Rachel Maxwell has stated on more than one occasion that our current location/space was designed for a much smaller congregation and limits our ability to grow.

Q. What is the history of membership over the last 20 years?

A. Please see Rachel Maxwell’s “Next Steps” PowerPoint presentation under UUA Consultant’s Report section of the website (<https://uurochmn.org/uua-consultants-report/>).

Q. When will there be more discussion of what problems we need to address by staying in our current building?

A. That will be part of the discussion at the Dec. 4 forum with architects, and at other forums.

Q. Are there restrictions on what the city would allow us to if we remodel or rebuild on our current location?

A. There would be no restrictions from a heritage preservation viewpoint. However, we would need to comply with city zoning and building codes, just as any other property owner would need to.

Q. If we stay, does the neighborhood have to approve any major changes to the property?

A. What happens is that the city sends out notice of what the building plans would entail, and nearby residents would have a chance to provide comments back to the city.

Q. Is it possible to build underground parking to increase parking capacity?

A. Our current site is very rocky in nature. A consultant we engaged would not even make an estimate for underground parking because they said there were too many unknowns and risks with such a site as ours.

Q. What are the renovation options?

A. A deeper discussion of this will occur at future forums, particularly the Dec. 4 forum with architects.

Q. What are the costs of renovation and of building new?

A. These issues will be discussed at the Dec. 4 forum with architects and at other forums.

Q. How would traffic and parking work at the 10-acre site that has been offered by donors?

A. Rochester traffic engineering staff will assess that property and three adjacent undeveloped properties to come up with a traffic plan. As for parking, those details are dependent on the traffic flow as well as the building footprint.

Q. What is the value of our current church and property?

A. An updated estimate will be provided by a local Realtor at a Nov. 9 forum.

Q. How much money do we think can be raised in a capital campaign whether we stay and renovate or move to another site?

A. UUA consultant Rachel Maxwell has stated that, in her experience, a UU congregation can expect to raise 3 times to 5 times its annual budget in a capital campaign. With our annual budget in excess of \$500,000, that range would be \$1.5 million to \$2.5 million.

Q. Will the January 2023 vote ask for a financial commitment for renovate or new?

A. No, the purpose of the January 2023 vote is to decide on our intention as a congregation – do we explore in more depth the option of moving, or do we explore in more depth the option of staying.

Q. How would a mortgage affect our annual budget?

A. The annual budget would not be reduced due to a capital campaign. The cost of a mortgage would be an additional annual expense – and how big of an expense would depend on the amount of the mortgage and interest rate.

Q. Aside from money raised in a capital campaign, what other sources of money could go toward a building project?

A. We could take out a mortgage (\$1 million or more, according to UUA consultant Rachel Maxwell) and we could use the proceeds of the sale of our current property if we moved to a new location.

Q. Where do I get additional information about the donor site?

A. Please see the Donor Site information on our website (<https://uurochmn.org/possible-move-to-sites/>).

Q. What happens to the current Memorial Garden if we move?

A. Rev. Luke has had numerous discussions with people whose loved ones' remains are in the Memorial Garden. He has said that if we move, we will engage in very respectful process to move the Memorial Garden to a new sanctified Memorial Garden site. Other UU congregations have faced this issue as well. The Memorial Garden agreement and Board policy currently address the potential for future relocation of the memorial. The Building Our Future/Beyond Ourselves team has begun discussions with the Memorial Garden Committee in order to inform the Board and the congregation about related decisions they may wish to consider. It is possible that the Garden may need relocation regardless of the voting outcome in January.

Q. If we move, how long will it take to get settled into a new building and property?

A. It's hard to predict, but it's a years-long process.

Comments from the Sept. 14, 2022, forum

- I want a place to call my spiritual home. I want a place for my kids to grow up with good role models. It matters less where the building is or what it looks like. Changing a building is so hard. You will lose people. But I love all the work the committee has done to make sure all voices are heard – and you have a clear path forward.
- It's very important to invite people of color at various financial levels. The church needs to be accessible to people on the streets and their arts and gifts to share and express.
- People need time to catch up on what has been discussed or gathered to date.
- I wonder what the best size is for a church. Could we divide into two congregations? What size is necessary to afford another minister and additional staff?
- I don't think we should have two churches because splitting up the congregation feels divisive.
- I wonder what issues we would face if we decided to split into two congregations.
- I wonder if we could have two separate sites with each site for a separate purpose.
- I wonder whether the congregation numbers (currently at about 380 members) will stay stable enough to warrant pursuing our building/remodeling plans.
- Because of COVID and people getting used to Zoom attendance, we may not need as large of a church/parking lot.
- I wonder if enough people will be attending church in-person to require more space.
- The present church has a legacy that should not be dismissed. Can we save and build upon that legacy?
- I like the idea of rebuilding on this site.
- We need a warm, inviting area to welcome new members, as well as an environmentally focused space, space for young people and families because they are the future of our church.
- I'd like to see an indoor space big enough for our entire congregation to gather in.
- Our current Commons area is not big enough to accommodate our Wednesday evening dinners.
- We need space for a 400+ congregation, a much larger kitchen and place to eat and meet. We need better HVAC and to be energy-efficient. We need more space for kids and education. We need a building that can be easily adjusted/changed, flexible over long periods of time.
- We need a larger kitchen and a gathering area near the kitchen.
- It's very easy for a kid to get hurt on our playground (splinters and poison ivy). When I look after kids, the steep hill is hard to climb up, not easily accessible. When passing kids who are on the swings it is a hazard (no room and steep cliff).
- The upstairs in our current location is very dark and small. There is never enough room in classrooms.
- We need more natural light.
- We need a better space for kids (craft area, things for them to do).
- Comparative estimated costs for different options need to be provided at early forums as background for other discussions prior to the vote.
- Whatever we do, accessibility and accommodation are extremely important.
- Our building needs to be accessible to all people, with a better flow through the building.
- I would prefer our location be near a bus line.
- The donated property is too big. We can't take care of this property right now.