

BUILDING OUR FUTURE: Beyond Ourselves



Summary of the First UU Building Our Future Architectural Design Survey

July 2023

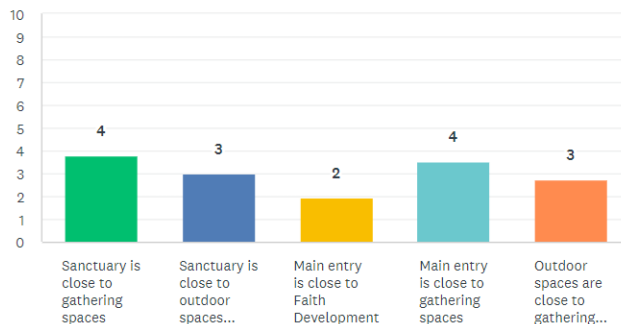
During our years of congregational discernment, we developed a long wish list of items that people suggested should be considered in a new space. With the congregational decisions to build a new building, purchase the Viola Road property, and engage Locus Architects, we needed to shift from a wish list of “things” to refining the description of our mission driven space.

As part of a design process, members and friends of the congregation were invited to participate in an online architectural design survey. In addition to basic demographic questions, the architects wanted to hear our responses to the aesthetic questions of what makes a beautiful building and how do we want the building to feel, as well as describing how we flow through the space when we enter the building.

This report summarizes the information shared in 167 responses.

For First UU's new building, rank in order of importance:

Answered: 157 Skipped: 10



	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	SCORE
Sanctuary is close to gathering spaces	35.03% 55	28.66% 45	20.38% 32	12.10% 19	3.82% 6	157	3.79
Sanctuary is close to outdoor spaces (trails and/or outdoor gathering areas)	24.20% 38	15.92% 25	14.65% 23	26.75% 42	18.47% 29	157	3.01
Main entry is close to Faith Development	3.18% 5	8.28% 13	18.47% 29	19.75% 31	50.32% 79	157	1.94
Main entry is close to gathering spaces	25.48% 40	33.12% 52	17.83% 28	15.29% 24	8.28% 13	157	3.52
Outdoor spaces are close to gathering spaces	12.10% 19	14.01% 22	28.66% 45	26.11% 41	19.11% 30	157	2.74

How do you want the building to feel? Describe how you'd like to "experience" the space emotively.

The most frequently used attributes described a welcoming and friendly space filled with light and a direct connection to nature. Considerable attention was also given to accessibility, a building that is inviting, and one that does not present obstacles to people with physical challenges. A representative sampling of quotes includes:

- I want to feel like nature is being brought indoors.
 - I want to arrive in a beautiful, open space that allows for socialization and greets me with hope and optimism.
 - I want the sanctuary to be simple and light filled to allow the spoken word and music to fill our minds, inspire us, and be a place that feels "sacred". I want the gathering spaces to be a bit more separated so that sound doesn't spill over and can be places of joy and spontaneity with enough space to enter, move about, and mingle, with "niches" where people can still be with others, but have quieter opportunities for dialogue.
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How could a new building encourage the congregation to grow and welcome new members?

There is a general sense that simply having more and less congested space will send a strong signal that people are welcome and that there is room for them and their families. There is also the belief that having sufficient space to offer programming to a broader audience will help grow our church community.

- A large, welcoming space that doesn't feel constricted or overcrowded will increase the probability that visiting newcomers will come back and stay.
 - Have a large kitchen and dining room where the congregation or community could be served, where we could come together to learn and support each other.
 - Provide an attractive space that provides community engagement and opportunities for community activities/rentals beyond just for church members.
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How might this new building help build community (First UU, Rochester and beyond)?

A sense of welcome and accessibility were again mentioned as priorities, as well as safety especially in terms of working with justice partners. Respondents were interested in providing a beautiful space for private events as well as hosting community events ranging from art exhibits to author/poet readings. Direct quotes include:

- Create a positive image of UUism, be visible, attract people to visit and learn more about UU.
- Offering a variety of spaces for community activities big and small – different classrooms, performance spaces, rehearsal rooms, meditation rooms and worship space.
- Have something like a daycare or outside organizations rent our space for events during the week. That would connect Rochester with us and allow us to serve our community in new ways.

What makes a beautiful building?

There was frequent mention that the placement and the design of the building should be integrated with the flow of the land and the natural environs of the property. Native woods, stained and clear glass, and natural stone were mentioned as preferred building materials while incorporating natural light throughout the facility. A sampling of comments includes:

- Standing out as distinctive and also fitting into its environment.
 - High ceilings, natural light, windows (stained glass and clear), artistic details on hardware or carpentry, natural wood and stone, spaces built with kids' needs in mind for RE wing.
 - A lot of natural lighting and interesting structure to captivate and hold a sense of wonder.
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And a sampling of statements from the *Additional Comments* section.

- To encourage young families, have a preschool during the week in the building with outdoor activities and play equipment.
 - The concept of being Radically Welcoming starts at the curb and progresses to the Sanctuary. I think a simple and interesting building, surrounded with inviting public places is welcoming to those living at the margins. We have an opportunity to make a real difference in Rochester, MN!
 - UU values include care for the Earth and sustainable living. Incorporate environmentally friendly design features, such as energy-efficient lighting, heating, and cooling systems, natural ventilation, renewable energy sources, and sustainable materials. This aligns with UU principles and reduces the ecological footprint of the building.
 - Use of wood and stone. It is common here to use limestone in building. That is nice, but using a lot of wood creates a warm and natural impression. Wood can be cheaper than many other materials, is environmentally very “green” and is remarkably fireproof. Modern composites, ie, engineered timber is strong and stable. Wood is sustainable, reduces the carbon footprint by nearly half when compared to concrete and steel. Since wooden buildings are lighter than concrete and steel ones, they can have smaller foundations. Engineered timber is fire-resistant since it is stable even when charred. So - that’s my pitch for wood!
 - I would hope that at least part of the building can be seen from the road (not overwhelmed by a parking lot) to draw people in.
 - Love to have a running fountain within the building to hear the sounds of the water; hope we have a labyrinth outdoors to walk.
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Demographic Data

- The largest group of respondents, 45%, indicated they were 70+
- 25% identified as 60-69
- 8% fall into the 50-59 age group
- 14% are 40-49

- 6% listed 30-39
- 1% of respondents were between 19-29
- 1% were 18 or younger.

One hundred and fifty six of the 166 respondents or 94% indicate they arrive at church via car; another 3% carpool and the other 3% bike, use public transportation or some other means.

We know from viewing data as well as those responding to this survey that live stream services are still being used with 75% of respondents indicating they participate via live stream 0-10 per year; another 21% view 11-40 times a year and 4% are viewing nearly every Sunday, reporting 41+ views over the year.

A majority of people, 52% come to the building once a week; 34% visit 2-4 times a week, 2% are in the building five or more times each week; while 12% may not enter the building during the year.

In the multiple choice question asking what do people do when they first arrive, Go to the Sanctuary and Go to the gathering spaces were closely represented, 68% and 62% respectively; and 12% make a classroom or meeting space their first stop.