

Grace Campus Plan Q &A

January 26, 2018

Thank you for the many and wise questions that you shared over the course of our four parish meetings. Grace is at the very beginning of exploring the possibility of entering into a partnership with the City of Portland and/or its Housing Authority to redevelop our campus. As a consequence, there are a good number of questions that cannot be answered yet. Here, however, is a beginning.

The possible partnership with the City would see Grace preserving the church itself (i.e., the worship space) and replacing some or all Grace's other buildings. What Grace would bring to the partnership would be the equity in the land, which we estimate to be worth between 4 and 5 million dollars. Via the terms of a long-term lease (perhaps 75 or 99 years), the City would remunerate Grace for the land and, in return, receive the right to build affordable housing on the Grace campus.

Let's segue into responses to your frequently asked questions.

How would we pay for redevelopment? Would doing so involve taking on debt?

Grace would pay for redevelopment by using the funds that we received under the terms of the long-term lease. Ideally, we would not exhaust these funds in the course of construction and, therefore, they would become an ongoing source of revenue to the parish.

We do not foresee a scenario in which we would assume debt to finance the project.

Are there restrictions on the land?

Angeline Berry, who donated the Northeast corner of the Grace campus (i.e., the corner on which the church proper sits), specified that this portion of the campus must be used for the purposes of the Episcopal Church and that it must not assume a mortgage or other debt. There are no other restrictions on the land.

Does the Diocese know about this possibility?

Yes.

If Vestry chooses to enter into a time of discernment with the City of Portland, we will meet with the Diocesan Board of Trustees to brief them about this conversation and to let them know that there may come a time, a number of months from now, when (a) our parish has met on multiple occasions to review and pray over possibilities; and (b) we have concluded negotiations with the city. On that future occasion, we would ask the Trustees to approve a redevelopment project.

The Board of Trustees is an important safeguard in this project. If a parish were to contemplate doing something reckless, such as selling property, the Trustees would be there to prevent such a mistake.

Will the kitchen be remodelled?

Yes, a redeveloped campus would feature a new kitchen.

Would a redeveloped campus be ADA accessible throughout?

Yes.

Could we get a variance to go higher than 75 feet?

We are certainly allowed to ask. The advice that we have received thus far, however, is that such a variance is unlikely.

Is the scope of this project negotiable?

Yes. A possible outcome of our parish's discernment is to conclude that God's plan for Grace necessitates the preservation and restoration of the current campus just as it is. (As Paddy Tillett reminded us, this conclusion would necessitate our parish committing to participating enthusiastically in a capital campaign.) Another possible outcome is that we conclude that, with the exception of the church proper, the total replacement of our current ministry spaces represents the best Christian stewardship of our land. And there are numerous potential outcomes somewhere in between these two.

Can we preserve visual access to the church building?

Yes. This would flow out of design and negotiation.

How much parking would there be in the future?

This would also flow out of design and negotiation. One scenario would see the current 55 parking spaces dedicated for Grace duplicated in a redeveloped campus. Parking spaces are very expensive, however, and money that we spend here is unavailable to spend elsewhere. As a parish, we may discern that we are willing to have a reduced number of spaces on site, and to use alternative means to get to church (such as parking on the street or in a nearby lot and walking a short distance to church, car-pooling, using ride sharing or mass transportation, operating a shuttle, etc.) and thereby free the resultant savings for use for other ministry purposes.

Would there be clergy/staff housing in a new building?

There could be. As above, this is a negotiable element. Vestry is attracted to the idea of maintaining or creating clergy/staff housing, either on the Grace campus or elsewhere in Portland, so as to avoid being at the mercy of the rapidly increasing value of close-in Portland real estate as we retain and recruit clergy and staff.

Could we build a bell tower?

We could.

Can we keep everyone involved in the design process?

Yes. This is a core goal of both Vestry and the Planning Committee. We intend to meet with you often and in a variety of formats.

Would a redeveloped campus preserve the historical or heritage elements of the current campus?

Yes. This is also a core goal of both Vestry and the Planning Committee. If, for instance, we were to move the chapel into a new building, we would ensure that it was transferred by expert craftspeople. Similarly, we would look for every opportunity to integrate heritage and historical items into new construction. Our goal is to have vibrant and living ministry space that simultaneously honors our tradition.

How much space would Grace have after construction?

Our goal is to have no less than 20,000 square feet of ministry space – equal to the current parish hall plus the two houses. We would design the new space to operate more effectively to serve Grace’s mission.

What do we mean by “affordable housing”? What proportion of the development would be affordable?

Affordable housing in Portland is defined as offering rents to tenants with incomes at or below 60% of the prevailing median family income for Multnomah County. Rents are calculated at 30% of that income, and a utility allowance is provided. In a partnership with the City, 100% of the housing would be affordable.

Would Grace be a landlord for the people living in affordable housing?

We do not foresee a scenario in which Grace would function as the landlord for the residents of the affordable housing. When we refer to a long-term lease, we mean a land lease with the City. Grace does not anticipate any role in renting housing units to tenants. The City and/or Housing Authority would manage the building or hire a 3rd party property manager.

Who would make the final decision on design?

The overall design would be developed and negotiated by Grace, the City, and the Housing Bureau. In the Episcopal tradition, Grace's approval of the design would fall to our Vestry and then be subject to the approval of the Diocesan Board of Trustees. Vestry's decision would be predicated on the will of our parish.

How could a renovated campus improve safety and security?

As is true in so many areas, building design and materials have advanced dramatically over the decades. Design elements could make the building welcoming in nature while also ensuring that visitors would pass through a greeting area where they would meet a staff person. It could also integrate elements such as a keypad or other identification system for entry during low-use periods, such as weekday mornings.

What will happen to Grace Institute, PHAME, and our other building partners during construction?

It is too early in our process to answer this question in a meaningful way. We can say, however, that both Grace Institute and PHAME are aware that a significant project on the Grace campus is a possibility. We will actively involve our building partners as this conversation continues.

Have we chosen a contractor? If not, how will we go about doing so?

We have not chosen a contractor. The City of Portland and the Housing Authority have an established process for seeking bids for such projects and we would work with them to find a suitable contractor.

How would this project further the Gospel?

It would allow Grace to not only accommodate its current ministries, but allow room for growth and greater engagement with the community in bringing the Gospel to the neighborhood and the city.

How would the neighbors be involved in this process?

We will work with the city and the neighborhood association to determine the best ways to engage our neighbors.

Would a completed project be environmentally responsible and sustainable?

This is a goal of both Vestry and the Planning Committee.

Is there a plan to help the community thrive during construction?

There will be - and we will need your help in creating it! Thankfully, this is not a situation in which Grace needs to reinvent the wheel. We are in conversations with parishes that have already completed major renovations and emerged from them as vibrant and vital worshipping communities. Together, we can craft a plan that will allow Grace to do the same.

What control would the church have over who lives here?

This would be negotiated in our work with the city.

Would this project provide for the seismic upgrade of the Nave and Chancel (i.e., the worship space)?

It could. This would be open for negotiation.

What would be the cost of renovating the existing spaces?

We are working on obtaining an estimate to renovate the current spaces.

What is the vision behind this project?

Our goal is to be “A parish for all people in the heart of the city,” to proclaim the Gospel, to say “yes” to following Jesus. We want to work with you to discern what that goal means in specific terms. Our initial sense is that we will further this goal by making our campus accessible, by addressing its many maintenance needs, by making it financially stable and sustainable, and by deepening the ways in which it is a gift to our community. In doing so, we will make our campus sufficient to “further God’s work in the world.”

What are the benefits of partnering with another entity?

By partnering with another entity we would be able to leverage the value of our land (without selling it or borrowing on it) and make necessary improvements to the campus without a major capital campaign.

What control would Grace have over the leased-out portion?

This would be negotiated in our work with the City/Housing Bureau.

What would be the financial benefits for Grace?

Grace would benefit from a campus that will accommodate our many ministries and our partners without incurring debt or investing in a capital campaign. There may also be steady income from a long-term land lease, depending on terms negotiated with a partner, if that is the road we decide to take.

