



FACILITIES TASK FORCE

February 2022 Recommendations to Governing Board

BACKGROUND

We have operated as a multi-campus church since First Community North opened in 1991. In the 30 years since, both our church and the communities served have evolved significantly. We've made material capital investments in each location, but development at North Campus has been most significant, allowing us to expand programs, fulfilling the congregation's preference of sacred space, augment worship options, and attract new members in more rapidly growing areas of the city.

Recently, attendance and engagement at First Community South has waned. And despite a regular cadence of capital investments and recent facilities improvements, the South Campus is still burdened by deferred maintenance needs while its aged footprint is poorly suited to support future ministries and space priorities.

The Facilities Task Force (FTF) was formed to address the Strategic Plan Imperative as stated: "Determine next steps for our physical facilities with a special focus on First Community South." At the initial meeting the group was asked: "Looking 10, 20, 30 years down the road, what is this ministry going to look like and how are the facilities going to cultivate that ministry?" The FTF quickly concluded that the long-term strategy for ministries needed to be defined through a collaboration of clergy, staff, and lay leaders, after which specific space and facilities needs would become clearer. Having said that, the FTF engaged in rich discussions on the future of our facilities, considering multiple options: (1) consolidation into a single location at First Community North; or (2) commitment to the existing two-campus model and the revitalization of First Community South.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1:

Given both financial and mission/ministry considerations, we recommend that First Community **maintain the South Campus and make a strong commitment to its health and vitality** as part of a multi-campus church model that best positions us to maximize the reach of our message and ministries. With the infusion of new housing and the number of young families moving into the area, the FTF concluded that the time is right for growth at FC South. While much more detailed planning is needed, the FTF believes significant changes are needed at South Campus to support likely future program priorities and make the facility more functional, flexible, and more inviting in appearance. Specifically, we recommend considering:

- Removal of the Annex and Lincoln Road Chapel (upon securing alternative space better suited for the important Trading Post and Heart to Heart ministries);
- Creation of an outdoor green space/patio space that will include areas for recreation, outdoor events, and worship;
- Completion of deferred maintenance items (see attached) that are required for the longer-term viability of the main building;
- Make the outside aesthetic (landscaping, signage, etc.) more inviting, reflecting our commitment to be a vibrant and inviting church.
- Redevelopment of the main building's footprint outside the sanctuary, including Burkhart Chapel) to be more versatile in support of classroom, meeting, activity, recital, lecture, and other future uses.
- Dedicate some specific clergy/staff to each campus to support not only ministry and program priorities but elevate our ability to successfully engage in and attract members from the individual communities served by each location.

Recommendation 2:

We recognize that the success of this model will require fundamental changes to how we operate and staff the church and its programs as well as how we engage members and the broader community. We also know that as our ministries evolve, so do our needs for space that supports those ministries. So, we further recommend that program staff create a plan for ministry, programming, missions and needed staffing to provide opportunities for growth at First Community South (and the continued evolution of First Community North).

Once the program staff has developed this plan, a team of program staff and lay leaders will be formed to consider the space needs at FCS and to propose any recommendations for renovation.

This planning process will take time, during which the Horizons campaign, intended to retire debt from the Realize Capital Campaign, will be in process. After the completion of this campaign, additional capital investments may be proposed to improve our facilities.

Throughout these strategic processes, the program staff will, as is stated in the Strategic Plan, present progress updates to the Governing Board every six months.

RATIONALE - MISSION

- While weekly worship attendance at First Community South has been low recently, the South Campus houses many important ministries (Heart to Heart, Trading Post, First Community Preschool, etc.) and is also home to numerous small group programs as well as many staff offices.
- We believe that the lack of worship attendance and engagement at South Campus is largely “self-inflicted.” We haven’t sufficiently evolved our programs to meet changing interests, and we have not effectively marketed our church and message nor cultivated a consistent and relevant community presence. Grandview/Marble Cliff is a dynamic neighborhood that has changed significantly in recent years. It is a culturally progressive, inclusive, and highly-engaged community with needs for facilities that support educational, spiritual and social justice programs that we are ideally suited to provide. We believe that the right commitment to innovative and relevant programs with supporting staff and spaces at South Campus, along with new marketing and membership development strategies and a consistent community presence, can restore a healthy and vibrant energy to First Community South.
- Our history – and the spiritual roots of many of our members – are attached to First Community South. It is vital that this history of inclusive theology and innovative ministry continue to inform and inspire our church’s future.

RATIONALE – FINANCIAL / OPERATIONAL

- While there are some obvious benefits of consolidation (convenience/operational simplicity and nominal expense savings), the loss of space at South Campus would require the addition of space at North Campus (office, meeting, classroom, etc.). The capital outlay for this additional space is projected to match (or likely exceed) the investments required to address remaining maintenance needs and redevelop South Campus to meet forward ministry priorities.
- Abandoning First Community South would likely result in a drop in church attendance/membership and a reduction in pledging units/dollars that is greater than the operating expense savings created by consolidation.
- Viewed through a long-term lens, the financial benefit of selling the Cambridge Blvd. property (either to another church or for residential rezoning) is relatively low and very short-lived.

CONCLUSION

First Community has a long history of growth and success. We must continue to celebrate that history, but we must be bold in shaping the future of our church in rapidly changing times. Having programs and ministries – and supporting spaces - that appeal to all generations, especially younger families in the surrounding community, are key to revitalizing First Community South.

Respectfully Submitted: December 2021

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APPENDIX

We discussed MANY things during our deliberations on the future of South Campus. Below are captured very high-level notes regarding potential facility improvements at First Community South to support future church ministries.

In recommending the removal of the Annex and Lincoln Road Chapel from the property we discussed:

- Exploring possible relocation of the Trading Post and Heart to Heart ministries to a more appropriate location in a commercial district accessible to clients by public transportation.
- Developing an outdoor green space/patio space in a park-like setting available for recreation, fellowship, outdoor worship, concerts, etc. (and open to the community).

Develop a plan to address remaining “deferred maintenance” investments needed at First Community South such as:

- HVAC system replacement / upgrade
- Window repair / replacement and double-paning as needed
- Remedy remaining issues related moisture
- Tuck pointing

Develop a strategy for:

- Worship and youth programming at each campus that are developed and marketed to the specific targeted audiences.
- Considering rebranding First Community’s youth program to leverage the energy and brand equity of Camp Akita (i.e., “Akita at Home” or just “Akita”).
- Staffing FCS by at least some dedicated clergy and program staff who can be entirely focused on developing a vibrant church culture and community presence in that location.
- A South Campus facility that marries up to the future ministry and outreach priorities. Potential examples:
 - Renovate Burkhart Chapel to be a small, multi-purpose lecture and recital space (available for use by the church and the community).
 - “Gut” and redevelop sections of the 1320 building in order to leverage its footprint for more versatile classroom, meeting, and activity spaces.
 - Consider aesthetic investments in the sanctuary that balance its existing beauty/history and the desire for brighter and more energizing spiritual space.
 - Welcome Center Coffee Shop open to members and local residents.