

THE PLANNING AND BUILDING PROCESS **AN OVERVIEW**

by Rick Murray

How does a church get from here (the dream stage) to there (building complete stage)? The following is a condensed version of this process. If further explanation is needed, the appendix contains a more thorough discussion of each of the steps listed below.

STEPS 1 AND 2: THE CHURCH'S VISION AND MINISTRIES

Before thinking about concrete and bricks, the church needs to be united in the direction of its ministries and what it wants to accomplish. In other words, what is the church's vision of its purpose and mission in response to the leading of the Holy Spirit, community studies, and church studies? Is there a spiritual consensus that this is God's plan for the church? Buildings should support and promote the church's vision and ministries; these buildings are tools used to support the church's mission.

The Motivation Test¹

The following test contains ideas which should be examined before the building process begins. Which of the following reasons to build are motivating the church to consider building?

- 1) A new building will attract new people to the church.
- 2) Members will be more motivated to reach out to others once a new building is available.
- 3) The new building will inspire people to worship.
- 4) A building program will involve more people in the church's work.
- 5) A building program will motivate church members to give generously to the church's work.
- 6) A building program will unify the members behind a significant challenge.
- 7) A new building will make a statement to the community about the church's importance.
- 8) Members will take greater pride in their church when a new building is complete.
- 9) A new facility will provide people with a more effective tool for ministry.

All nine of these reasons are common, but most are not adequate reasons to build. The last statement, number nine, is motivation for building consistent with the purpose of the church. If the church regards buildings as tools, this will guide the decision not only of whether to build but also what to build.

The following statements summarize the important ideas the church must consider before building:

- **Where there is no vision, the people perish (Proverbs 29:18).**

- **Ministry over buildings: buildings are tools to be used for ministry.**
- **People over buildings: buildings are tools to be used by people.**
- **Seek God’s vision for the church.**

STEP 3: PROPERTY AND BUILDING ASSESSMENT

The church should have a site plan made showing all existing conditions. A surveyor will need to be hired to do a building survey which shows all building layouts. The next component which must be addressed is, “How much can the church afford to build?” This is usually three or four times the church’s annual contributions. Once the project’s cost has been estimated, the church should start planning how to finance the project.

STEP 4: MASTER PLANNING

The church should prepare a plan for future property and future buildings. This includes several phases of building over the next ten to fifteen years. In most cases, an architect is needed to do this.

STEP 5: BUILDING SCHEMATIC DESIGN PHASE

During this phase the church should do the following:

- hire an architect and start the building design.
- develop the building floor layout.
- develop the exterior look of the buildings.
- establish a project budget.
- develop a more detailed financial plan.

STEP 6: CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

During this process, the church should finalize how the building project is to be financed. If a capital fund consultant is to be hired, the church should start the capital fundraising campaign. Once this has begun, the church should finalize its status with a lending institution for construction and permanent financing.

STEPS 7 and 8: DESIGN DEVELOPMENT PHASE

During these steps the church should have the architect develop the building design by adding more floor plans, details, elevations, and schedules. Next, the church should move into the construction document phase. A preliminary time schedule should then be established. Following this the church should monitor the design development and compare it to the established budget. Adjustments in the design should be made so the project can remain within

the set budget. With the designer's advice, the church should then choose major materials, systems, and finishes.

STEP 9: BIDDING OR NEGOTIATING

The following are examples of church-architect-contractor relationships (otherwise known as delivery systems):

- Traditional: Pre-qualify four or five general contractors. The bid is based on completed drawings. Awarding is to be made based on a lump sum contract. This method occurs during step 9.
- Negotiated: Interview four or five general contractors. The selection is based on 30% completed drawings and a quoted fee. Award is made based on a cost-plus, guaranteed maximum contract. This method would occur during Step 5.
- Design-Build: Interview four or five general contractors. Selections are based on the master plans and a quoted fee. The contractor is responsible for the design and the construction. Award is to be made based on a cost-plus guaranteed maximum contract. This method would occur during Step 4 or 5.
- Construction Management: This is usually applicable to large projects which cost over seven or eight million dollars.
- Package Builders: These builders will be responsible for all aspects of the project, including design, construction, furnishing, financing, etc. They usually offer a limited structural system and floor layout.

STEPS 10 and 11: CONSTRUCTION

- At this point the church should plan a groundbreaking ceremony and award the contract. The AIA standard form of contracts is a good contract form. The church should also have a legal consultant review the contract.
- Another important part of this phase is to pay the contractor on time!
- The church should verify that either the contractor or the church covers all necessary insurance. A consultation with the church's insurance carrier should be scheduled regarding the following types of insurance:
 - Workman's compensation
 - Liability
 - Bonding
 - Builder's risk
- The church should also verify that the contractor has obtained all necessary permits.
- The schedule should be reviewed, making certain that the contractor has a reasonable plan to comply with the schedule.
- If the work requires church activities to be relocated, the church leaders should coordinate these.

- The church committee should meet monthly or more often with the architect and the contractor.
- A dedication ceremony should be planned.
- The church should agree on the date of substantial completion.
- Committee members should accompany the architect and the contractor during the final inspection of the project. The church should have no more than two or three persons involved during this first inspection.

STEP 12: MOVING INTO THE BUILDING

At this juncture the church should obtain record drawings and final building information from the contractor. This valuable information should be stored and safeguarded! This information should include the following:

- Record drawings
- List of subcontractors
- Color schedule
- Finish materials that were selected
- Operating and maintenance manuals
- Standard and extended warranties

The church should promote the use of the building to the glory of God and to further the vision and ministries of the church.

¹ Bowman, Ray. *When Not to Build*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2000.