

Typical Church Planning and Building Process

When a church's ministry requires construction of new or expanded facilities, there is a typical process that church leadership can follow that should allow for a positive outcome.

The first and most important event in a successful building process is to define the shared ministry vision of the congregation and prepare a ministry plan that the building process will follow. The entire congregation should fully understand and become aligned with what God's Calling is for their church. This process can define or clarify what are the church's current and new ministries that will fulfill God's calling. The new or expanded facilities can then follow and facilitate the church's ministry.

LCEF Ministry Support has several offerings that can assist a congregation in defining and clarifying their ministry plan. VisionPath is a great place to start to bring clarity to your vision.

Once there is a defined ministry plan and clarity on the ministry path, the congregation should create a Building/Planning Committee approved by the church council and congregation. This committee will provide leadership throughout the building process and coordinate all the contributors in the process. A diverse representation on the committee including older, younger, male, and female members will help develop the full understanding of the goals and needs of the congregation to fulfill the ministry plan of the congregation. Special talents or expertise would be beneficial on the committee. An important responsibility of the committee will be continued communication with the congregation and pastor regarding the planning and building progress.

Upon the establishment of the Building/Planning Committee, preparation of a comprehensive long-range facilities master plan that will fulfill the ministry plan will need to be developed. This will require the selection and contracting with a qualified architect, registered to practice in that state. The architect can interpret the ministry plan and create the spaces and configuration on the site needed to facilitate the ministry plan and to meet all building codes and regulations. The architect will work in a series of phases beginning with creation of a building program that will define, quantify, and begin to shape the building project. The building program will include a statement and establishment of the project goals, a collection and identification of facts that will need to be addressed, listing and quantifying of the needs required to fulfill the goals. With this information defined, design concepts can be generated that achieves the goals, facts, and needs for the Building/Planning Committee to respond to leading to a comprehensive master plan.

A comprehensive master plan will have documents and illustrations that include:

- Short- and long-term projections for growth
- Local zoning requirements and other entitlements
- Site plan with building locations and site improvements
- Schematic floor plans
- Exterior elevations
- Project budget (ALL COSTS)
- Phasing strategy with associated costs

When the Building/Planning Committee has reviewed and approved the Comprehensive Master Plan and identified the phases and associated costs, a presentation to the congregation should be made to gain support and assurance that the Master Plan meets the ministry plan developed by the congregation.

Upon gaining approval from the congregation, the Building/Planning Committee can authorize the architect to proceed with the development of the design. The architect will proceed with development of the design in the following stages:

- **Schematic Design** – Basic floor plans, elevations, site plan, materials selection, and illustrations to convey the project design. Initial structural and mechanical, electrical and plumbing, as well as civil engineering, will be prepared. The architect should confirm the project cost based on the approved design.
- **Design Development** – Further development of the design to include more developed building plans, site/landscape plan and building systems including structural, civil, mechanical, electrical, and plumbing engineering. Outline specifications for the project will be developed. Furniture and final finishes will be determined and specified. The architect should confirm the project cost based on the approved design development documents.
- **Construction Documents** – Comprehensive set of drawings and specifications for the project to be used to bid the project and construct the project.
- **Bidding and Negotiation** – The process to receive and tabulate the bids for the project leading to a contract for construction with a contractor.

- **Contract Administration** – Architect will administer the contract between the church and the contractor that will include review of the work to insure it meets the design documents and specifications, processing pay applications from the contractor, and final review of the work for the church.
- The architect can assist the Building/Planning Committee in the determination of the best project delivery method. These generally include:
 - Design/Award/ Bid/ Build (Traditional method)
 - Design/Negotiated Contract with General Contractor to be
 - Cost plus a fee to a guaranteed maximum cost
 - Laborers For Christ - LCEF

This decision will affect how the architect will complete the construction documents and specifications for the project

A project schedule (depending on project complexity) is generally:

VisionPath – 12 weeks

Master Plan Preparation – 3-4 months

Preparation of Design and Construction Documents – 6-8 months

Construction – 10-12 months

Financing and project budgeting should begin early in the process. During or upon completion of the Comprehensive Master Plan, a project budget needs to be prepared that will include all the projected costs including the hard costs that includes sitework, building, furnishings, art and soft costs that includes professional fees, financing costs, legal fees, etc. This project budget will serve as a guide for financing the project and determine what amount will be raised and what amount will need to be financed by a lending institution.

Contact LCEF to find an Architectural Advisory Committee member near you for additional information.



10733 Sunset Office Drive
Suite 300
St. Louis, MO 63127-1020
800-843-5233
lcef.org

The mission of the Lutheran Church Extension Fund is to support The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in the sharing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by being a Christ-centered servant partner, ensuring that funds and services are available now and in the future.

DISCLAIMER

These white papers are provided “as is” and without warranty of any kind, expressed or implied. Without limitation, there is no warranty of non-infringement, no warranty of merchantability and no warranty of fitness for a particular purpose. All warranties are expressly disclaimed. User assumes the full risk of using this specification. In no event shall LCEF be liable for any actual, direct or indirect, punitive or consequential damages arising from such use, even if advised of the possibility of such damages.