

## Building Campaign Launch Questions & Answers

Many of you attended the architects' presentation showing Beacon Flourishing at 695 Springfield Avenue. The Facilities Expansion Team, Board of Trustees and the Lead Ministry Team created this document to update you on the status of the project and to answer the questions that were raised. Please send additional questions to [FET@summitbeacon.org](mailto:FET@summitbeacon.org).

### **Important Considerations**

The 'Schematic Design', which has been presented and approved, locks in the footprint of the campus and will allow us to move forward with site engineering and application to the town. However, many of the building and landscape details will be nailed down during the 'Design Development' phase. This will not begin until we feel comfortable with the budget proposal and the congregation has a chance to vote on that Capital Budget at the Annual meeting on June 11, 2023 at 11:15 AM.

The Facilities Expansion Team (FET) has put together a Sustainability Advisory Group that is continuing discussions with the architects and other professionals (i.e., mechanical engineers, etc.) to discuss the best options to achieve the most sustainable campus possible given site and budget variables. This may include solar panels and ground source heat pumps.

The FET remains committed to our 8th Principle including inclusive hiring practices and decolonizing wealth through equitable vendor selection. They have not hired any further vendors at this time beyond the architects (which included the professionals noted in their proposal at the time of hire). The Board of Trustees is presently working on a policy, which will ensure anti-racism is woven into all contractor and vendor selection. This policy will guide the selection and contract process that the FET and Board will be engaging over the coming months. We are still looking for volunteers to assist us in researching prospects for further hiring of contractors and vendors needed.

### **What is the timeframe?**

We plan to submit a site plan to the City Zoning Board this summer. From submission, the approval process could take up to 9 months. As we have learned from our own experience and from numerous projects of houses of worship in and nearby Summit, a lot depends on the community dynamics and zoning process. Fortunately, our interactions with the neighbors have been very positive and the dynamics of this property, being surrounded by city land, are unique. After we submit to the zoning board and as we become more confident of approval, the architects will work on detailed Design Development drawings. Once we get city approval, and after another round of budget analysis and approval by

Beacon, the architects will prepare Construction Documents. From shovel in the ground to finish could take 1.5 years. If everything goes smoothly, we could be inaugurating our new building in Fall 2025.

Our timeline is also dependent on fundraising.

### **Questions about the Properties**

#### **What is the current seating capacity at 4 Waldron?**

Seats with good sight lines and clear hearing with hearing assistance devices: 120.

Total including those with obstructed views: 180.

#### **What will happen to our property at 4 Waldron Avenue in Summit?**

The Board has not yet made a recommendation to the congregation. They have commissioned two Task Forces that are looking into the property value and the missional potential of our 4 Waldron Avenue property.

#### **Does the 695 design mean that we need to keep 4 Waldron?**

No, the new building will give us everything we really need for our current ministries. The design gives us the flexibility to sell 4 Waldron Avenue, if the congregation votes in favor of selling.

#### **Can we sell the house (the actual building) at 695 and remove it to another site?**

That's not feasible given its size and condition.

#### **Can 695 Springfield Avenue be rented to schools?**

No, we are not planning for that possibility. It would mean many more regulatory and design requirements and would require major changes. We could possibly host an after-school program but this has not been the focus of our design process.

#### **How will we prioritize social justice in the new space, i.e., Summit Warm Hearts, shower, sanctuary lodging?**

We are the people who show up so Social Justice is the heart of who we are. This will not change at the new location. In fact, the new location will give us more possibilities for growing that ministry. The schematic has a shower and spaces that could be converted into sanctuary rooms (just as we did with our current space). As we live into the space, we will become more aware of what is possible to meet the needs of our community. For Summit Warm Hearts, 695 has the added benefit of being close to 2 train stations rather than just one, although we know that support for transportation will be needed.

**Can the building be expanded in the future by turning the one-story meeting space into two stories?** Yes, we are taking into account the potential for future expansion. The entire building, other than the sanctuary and social hall, will be built to support a second floor if needed.

**Will we comply with the new water management rules that will take effect in May?**

Yes. The landscape architect's plans are generally more rigorous than required.

**Who will get the permits?** The contractor (not yet hired).

### **Questions about the Sustainability/Outdoor Space/Landscaping**

**Are we planning to get LEED certification?**

We do plan in general to follow the standards set by LEED, but getting official LEED certification is an unnecessary expense.. In addition to LEED, there are more recent sustainability standards that may be preferable, and we will be considering all of them. We would rather put the dollars into sustainability than into the certification.

**Is it possible to have a community garden on our lot?**

Yes, we believe so, although we will initially be living into several of the landscape elements including the meadow and it may not be possible to do all of it at once.

**Will we be losing trees?**

Yes, some of the trees will be coming down. We will be working with the City's arborist. We will be obligated to plant additional trees and the landscape architect has indicated that they typically plant more than what's required especially given our intentions and requests we've made. Some of the large trees, such as the beech tree, are not in good health now.

**Will we need variances regarding the setback?**

Yes, on one side and the back.

**Will the pickleball courts next door be too noisy?**

We plan to add planting and a small berm to act as a buffer zone. Also, the City is currently planning to refurbish the courts, and we plan to request that they are moved farther from the sanctuary. As a note, you can't presently hear noise from the pickleball court inside the building during a meeting.

**What about banners and signage?**

Yes, the architects are looking at the best spots to place signage and to hang banners so that passersby and participants can readily identify Beacon.

**Do we have to worry about snow on the flat roof?**

The roof actually has a slope to it. In addition, our structural engineer will take snow loads into consideration to ensure the materials are strong enough to support them.

**Will the driveway and parking lot be permeable surfaces?**

We are exploring the possibility of semi-permeable surfaces, but have to consider the cost of not only installing but also maintaining them. We are also awaiting results of the soil test.

**Is there roof access to manage the garden?**

Yes, there will be a window for maintenance, but not for the public.

**Will you use native plants?**

Yes, exclusively.

**Questions about the Parking****Is the expectation that people will park on Springfield Avenue for Sunday services?**

Our new location will have parking, as required by the City, including accessible parking. Many will have to park on public roads, such as Springfield Avenue, as they are required to do now at 4 Waldron Avenue.

**There will be bottlenecks in the driveway the way it's designed; we should have a horseshoe shaped driveway with a separate entrance and exit.**

We have prioritized maximizing the usable outdoor space so do not want to allocate more green space to the driveway and parking than necessary. We also cannot take away parking spaces for a turnaround circle as we will need a City variance to provide fewer than the required number of spaces. We expect many people to park on Springfield Avenue and will be prioritizing on-site parking for those who need it most.

**Questions about the 695 Sanctuary/Offices/Fellowship****I like the acoustics of the current sanctuary and don't want to give that up.**

The FET has made acoustics a high priority for that very reason. From the start of the process, the architects have engaged an acoustical engineer. In addition, we have a member of the Music Team serving on the FET and have been and plan to be in conversation with the Music constituency group through each step of the process.

However, please note that there are places in our current sanctuary where it is often difficult to hear due to the eaves and the balcony, especially if there are any other sounds in the sanctuary. We receive that feedback regularly.

**I like the intimacy of our sanctuary. Will it seem empty for events with low attendance?**

Though the new sanctuary would be larger than our current one, it will still be an intimate, warm space. After the architects visited our current sanctuary in the beginning of the process, they observed the importance of intimacy in our worship space. The new design allows for intimacy alongside openness and accessibility. As the design is developed, the congregation will see better how the sanctuary will continue to feel both intimate and accessible.

Our chapel-size sanctuary keeps our attendance small, especially post-pandemic when people feel uncomfortable in small spaces with lots of people. It also makes it very difficult for people with accessibility issues.

**Due to the arrangement of the seating in the new sanctuary, would it be disruptive if people on the sides have to let in folks arriving later in the service?**

We have the option to arrange the chairs any way we'd like to make shorter rows. It will be something we experiment with!

**Why is it necessary for the "fence" hiding the ramp in the sanctuary?**

This may change in the design based on feedback after the launch.

**Can the architects add more windows to the sanctuary?**

The architects are considering adding windows. In the current design there is ample light, but most of it comes from above or behind the seats. The architects are trying to avoid the problems caused by glare in the front of the sanctuary, in response to the concerns from our Lead Ministry Team. Throughout the design, they wanted to give the congregation a space where indoor and outdoor were intrinsic to one another.

Windows and light have been a constant issue in our current sanctuary, especially since we started live-streaming our services, which requires much more controlled light. We've also spoken with other congregations who had large windows and discovered that birds often died flying into them.

**Will the welcome hall, which is connected to the open lifespan space be too noisy if it's all open?**

The entry lobby is separated from the social hall, which is directly outside the sanctuary, by glass doors and a wall. We will be looking at adding an additional partition to separate the commons area, or sound-absorbent materials to help with noise levels.

**Will the wood require ongoing maintenance?**

No, we're using thermally modified wood which requires almost no maintenance.

**Will there be storage for the choir and tables/chairs close by?**

Yes. There is a large storage area directly off the sanctuary.

**Why are we including an open area for the Lifespan program rather than traditional classrooms?**

This space is designed in response to feedback from our Lifespan volunteers, staff, and leads. When considering our new space for children, youth, and their families, you have to consider the full space, both indoor and outdoor. Having built nothing on the site, we are already seeing our families with children and youth engage the outdoor space. They love the playground, labyrinth, meadow, and forest. It allows the children to play together while the adults connect. This was something we gave up when we renovated 4 Waldron Avenue.

In addition, we have received feedback from parents, youth, and children that they do not want to go to school again on Sunday. An open area allows them to create worship, to gather in larger groups, and to engage in their activities. It's the way we currently operate.

**Are three offices sufficient?**

Yes. In addition to the three private offices, there will be a shared workroom. The pandemic has shifted the way our staff works with many working from home frequently. In addition, the meeting rooms (see below) can be used on days the full staff is on premises. Numerous houses of worship, organizations, and businesses have begun to operate in this fashion. A laptop and a cell phone may be enough to turn any room into an office or a meeting room. The Lead Ministry Team feels the office space is adequate.

**Are four meeting rooms sufficient?**

Yes, four meeting rooms, plus the sanctuary, give our entire community enough room to meet and to grow in the years to come, including Sunday morning children's programs, Sunday evening junior and senior youth high, and adult groups throughout the week.

For kids and youth programs, the outdoors space and the commons will allow us to flourish in a way that was compromised at 4 Waldron Avenue. Because our small groups meet at different times, we are able to conduct all the programs that are core to us – OWL, Coming of Age, small groups.

**Can we operate without a fellowship hall?**

Yes. The social hall and welcome area can serve that function for social time after events in the sanctuary. For events with meals, the sanctuary can be used opening up to the social hall.

Having the social areas woven throughout the footprint will allow for intimate as well as group conversations. The commons is a fabulous area for children's worship unlike the current space that is shared with coffee hour.

Beacon has received feedback from members and visitors alike over the last twenty years that they don't like going downstairs to a big room for social time after the services. Two of the Jewish synagogues in town utilize the design we're suggesting, with a social space off of their sanctuaries, to favorable reviews.

**Is there any consideration for security? Being able to close/lock the doors quickly from the sanctuary?**

The FET and Lead Ministry Team have already met with our consultants to discuss security measures. This planning work will continue so we can provide the necessary security measures for safety, not only on Sunday morning but throughout the week.

**Questions about the Costs**

**Does the \$17M cost mean that we're going to have to sell 4 Waldron?**

It depends on our fundraising and the congregation's priorities as well as the ways the future use of 4 Waldron may be restricted.

**Shouldn't we take a mortgage so that future congregants are sharing in the cost?**

The Board would like to try to avoid taking a mortgage. The congregation has had a deficit in the operating budget in the past 2 fiscal years. In addition, once we sell the property at 309 Springfield Avenue, we will lose the rental income which nets approximately \$80,000 per year. We are working hard to live within our means.

**Will the project need to be cut back to reduce the cost?**

The Board is working hard with the Capital Campaign who is fundraising and the FET and cost estimators to assess our options. The current design is already the result of balancing our needs in a new building with an intense focus on budget.