

# 2015 Future Structures Task Force Report

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**Purpose:** The number one goal for the 2014-2015 UUFC Board of Trustees is to "resolve how to move forward on our space needs", i.e. to generate a plan for addressing the Fellowship's need for more indoor and outdoor space. To this end the Future Structures Task Force should:

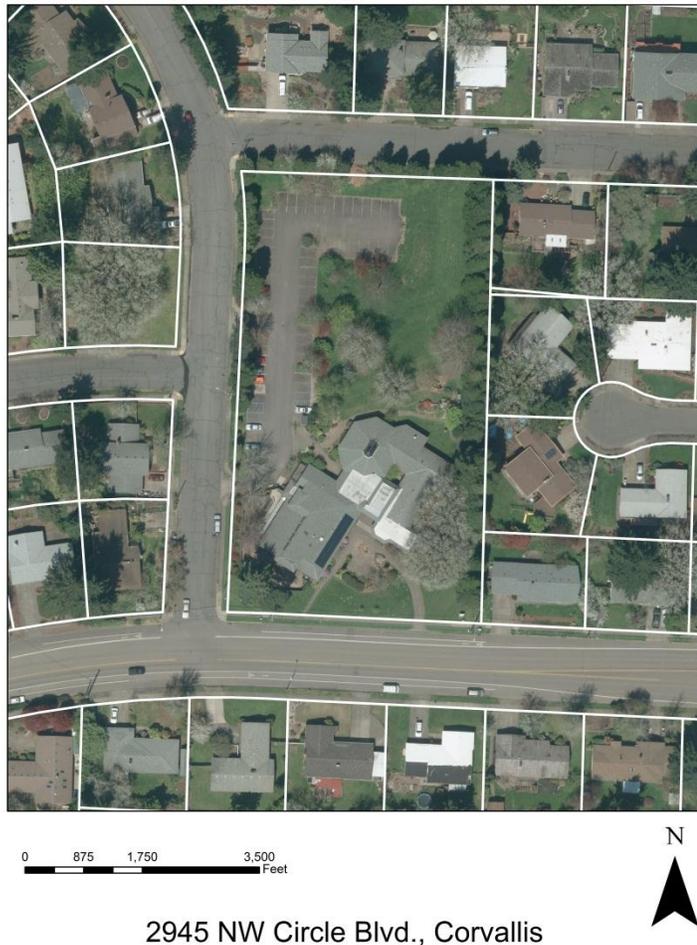
1. Conduct fact-finding to identify space issues, using past efforts and new input from staff interviews and the congregation.
2. Openly provide the congregation with facts, trends and projections for space needs, including as part of the 2015 canvass.
3. Articulate the processes necessary to address space needs that are created by various future growth projections.
4. Draft a presentation that clearly shows various future pathways and their respective space needs.
5. Refine the presentation with feedback from the congregation, and develop a recommendation for the Board.

## UUFC Congregational Building History:

Our Fellowship started in 1948 as a discussion group that met in the Benton Hotel and, later, on alternate Sunday evenings for several years at the Memorial Union. When these early Unitarian Fellowship members wanted to establish a religious education program for the children, they chose rentals at public schools in Corvallis. By 1954 the Fellowship had raised the funds to buy our current property, which at that time was on the edge of Corvallis along a gravel road. Surplus barracks from the U.S. Army's former Camp Adair were purchased and moved to the site to form the original building structures. Those members who had expertise in masonry, carpentry, electrical installation, plumbing, heating, dry wall, flooring, painting, etc., went to work and taught others (men, women, and young people) to work on the buildings as they were renovated. The original barrack structures are still a substantial part of our facilities, serving as the social hall/kitchen and as space for the RE program. A longtime member and architect, Edith Yang, designed our current sanctuary and RE Building expansions in the late 1980s on the current property (Exhibit I).

The UUFC experienced remarkable growth in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and there have been several cycles since when the congregation/Board has thought about enlarging the physical structures. Maintaining the current facilities takes constant vigilance and access to maintenance funds. Minor roof leaks, plumbing, painting and electrical issues are addressed regularly by our volunteer building committee and occasionally by professionals, but as our structures continue to age, preventive maintenance will require a greater contribution from the congregation in terms of budget and volunteer hours.

Most recently, out of concern that our buildings were constraining our program as well as reducing the quality of interactions among current members, the congregation approved a master plan in 2008 (developed in consultation with an architect) for an expansion of the UUFC's social hall, RE space and offices. At that time it was projected to cost about \$2,127,500 based on a construction area of 15,490 square feet; however, expansion plans were put on hold as a result of concerns over the general economic recession.



**Exhibit I – Aerial view of our beautiful property.**

## Summary of UUFC Master Plan, 2008

- From the UUFC Building Expansion Committee and STUDIO-E Architecture

The Board's charge in creating the Building Expansion Committee (BEC) in 2008 included six items:

1. The committee will include ongoing, decision-making leaders in preparing a proposal to present to the congregation.
2. Provide opportunities for feedback from the congregation.
3. Appoint one member to be a liaison to the Rita McDonald Gift Committee so that both groups are apprised of the other's decision processes.
4. Consider all proposals for more youth space (middle and high school youth particularly) within the broad context of other space needs already agreed upon, i.e., adult meeting room, enlarged social hall and kitchen, and better office and storage facilities.
5. Gather financial costs (good estimates) for each proposal and summarize how each of the various projects would be funded.
6. Report back to the Board regularly on an FYI basis and present a recommendation.

## The Needs and Stakeholders Considered by the BEC

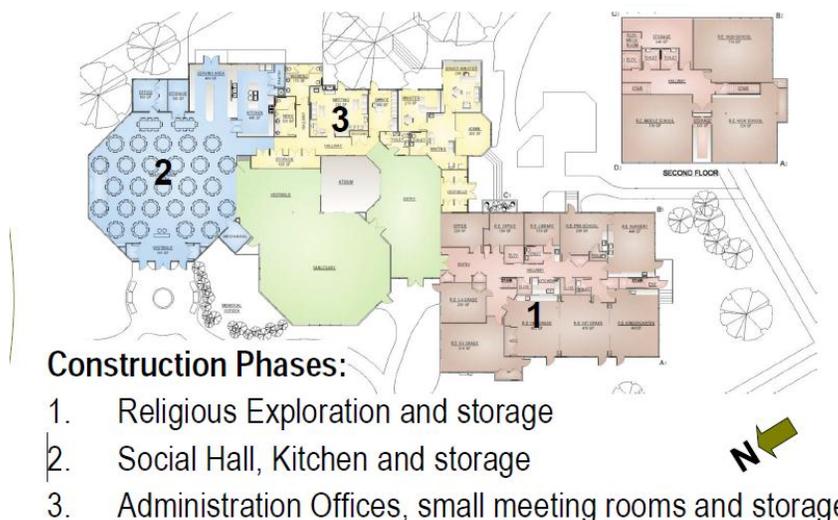
- More and bigger space for the youth and children - DREs and Congregation
- Limitations of our kitchen - Cooks
- Limited seating capacity at tables - Event planners
- More adult meeting space - Committees
- Too many functions in the office, causing work disruptions - Office administrator
- Office space for second/student minister - Congregation
- Insufficient storage - Committees, program leaders, staff
- Space conflicts in social hall - Aerobics group

The BEC was charged with prioritizing needs, keeping cost reasonable, ensuring constructability, meeting city zoning requirements, maintaining historical integrity of original barracks buildings, gaining Congregational awareness, and obtaining funding.

## Basis for the Master Plan

The BEC gathered information from staff and members in 2006-07 through a lengthy and involved process, and reached the following conclusions that guided the architect's development of a master plan (Exhibit 2).

- Sanctuary is sufficient for considerable growth of Sunday attendance.
- Many other functions occur in spaces that are often undersized, overworked, or insufficient.
- We're not interested in moving to a different site. We love our land and buildings and their history.
- We like being close together.
- We want to be in one connected building with no barriers to access and few levels.
- We prefer a small footprint; open space; environmental awareness; minimum of pavement.
- We want more RE space, and for it to be contiguous.
- We want more office space, adult meeting space, and storage.
- We want a bigger and better kitchen.
- We want a bigger and better social hall.
- The existing Social Hall is structurally suitable for renovation, but not for expansion.
- We want to seat 250 people at tables so that no one is turned away at the canvass or other dinners.
- We want to observe green practices in construction or renovation.



STUDIO-E Architecture

**Exhibit 2 - 2008 Master Plan schematic.** Submitted by the BEC.

### Summary of the resultant 2008 Master Plan

That master plan divided expansion and remodeling into three phases, which could be accomplished at once or at different times to accommodate funding and ease disruption of activities at the UUFC. **Exhibit 2** shows the overall plan with the three phases indicated by color. The order of the phases followed the priorities identified by the BEC, but they could be constructed in any order.

**Phase 1** (brown) - Religious Exploration and Storage: this expansion would be accomplished through some remodeling on the ground floor and a large expansion to the second floor by raising the roof, greatly expanding the area of all RE and storage rooms currently on the second floor, and adding an elevator. *NOTE:* Many of the recommended changes to the ground floor were completed in the summer of 2008.

**Phase 2** (blue) - Social Hall, Kitchen, and Storage: this expansion would be accomplished through construction of a new structure, slightly larger than the current sanctuary, to serve as the Social Hall. It would accommodate enough tables to seat up to 250 people and include a large kitchen, additional storage, and additional office space.

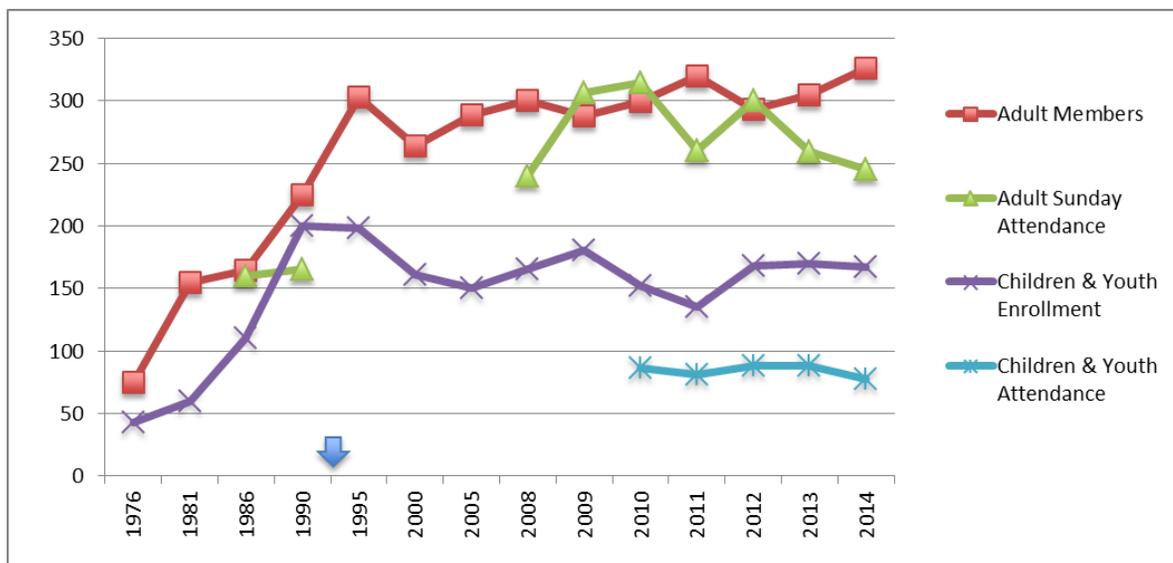
**Phase 3** (yellow) - Administrative Offices, Small Meeting Rooms, and Storage: this expansion would be accomplished through dividing the current Social Hall into several spaces: a second minister’s office, a small office/records storage room, a larger “living room” style meeting room, and additional restrooms. In addition, a vestibule would be created by enclosing part of the Circle Boulevard entrance, allowing for a coat closet that would free up space in the foyer.

### 2015 Updates to the Master Plan

Overall, the past impressions/desires from 2008 continue to occupy most of the debate about space and the physical structure of the UUFC. We are able to **update** some of those impressions based on recent input from staff and congregants, as well as provide some additional context for discussion.

- Sanctuary is **becoming insufficient** for Sunday attendance.

With Jill’s arrival, membership and peak attendance numbers are high and expected to increase (Exhibit 3).



**Exhibit 3 – Membership, enrollment and attendance numbers, beginning 1976 and marking the building expansion after 1986. RE classes were limited to 11:00am only in 2014.**

## UUFC Future Structures Task Force, 2015

The number of returning visitors on Sunday mornings has doubled in the last year, comparable to the spike concurrent with Jill's arrival in 2013. The choir, musicians, and choir director are often crowded amongst themselves and with the congregation. Large gatherings often spill well outside of the Sanctuary, which discourages attendance and establishes a plateau in numbers (particularly at 11:00am). Indeed, this sense of fullness likely explains why *average* Sunday sanctuary attendance numbers have largely been flat for the last decade. Membership, pledging and programs are all expanding.

- Many other functions occur in spaces that are often undersized, overworked, or insufficient.
- We want more **adult** RE space and for it to be contiguous.
- We want more office space, adult meeting space, and storage.

Children's RE space is not driving our current spaces issues as much as previously, though growth is anticipated in that program with a pulse of new members with children. Larger RE sessions (e.g. OWL programs) often exceed capacity. Our daycare tenant would like to expand. The emerging space issues typically center on afternoon/evening adult RE meeting spaces and groups/renters conflicting over space.

- We're not interested in moving to a different site. We love our land and buildings and their history.
- We like being close together.
- We want to be in one connected building with no barriers to access and few levels.
- We prefer a small footprint; open space; environmental awareness; minimum of pavement.
- We want to observe green practices in construction or renovation.

These continue as common sentiments, with growing emphasis on **environmental awareness** (retention of green spaces) and **energy efficiency**.

- We want a bigger and better kitchen.
- We want a bigger and better social hall.
- The existing Social Hall is structurally suitable for renovation, but not for expansion.
- We want to seat 250 people at tables so that no one is turned away at the canvass or other dinners.

These latter concerns are now dominant – the unfulfilled Master Plan vision (e.g. improved bathrooms, a large certified kitchen and new office spaces) were frequently referenced in our interviews.

**Additional new concerns** not explicitly listed/emphasized in 2008 but important to note here:

- 1) the parking lot is insufficient, becomes crowded early, and resultant street parking can exceed 100 cars and therefore several blocks in all directions (an issue for older congregants and those traveling with infants);
- 2) several existing groups would prefer to use the upstairs rooms if those spaces were more accessible (i.e. by elevator as proposed in 2008);
- 3) there is expanding interest in quality outdoor spaces for meetings and seasonal services (e.g. a labyrinth); and
- 4) the growth of the university has/will likely increase our congregation size.

## Cost Update

In a discussion with the architect in 2015, he estimated that the per-square-foot cost would be approximately \$144 (or a 20 percent increase after seven years). Expansion of facilities similar to that proposed in the 2008 Master Plan would now likely exceed \$2.5 million. In addition, such an expansion would reopen our Conditional Use Permit for the property such that every permit would receive extra review, including by our neighbors, and incur additional expenses for parking.

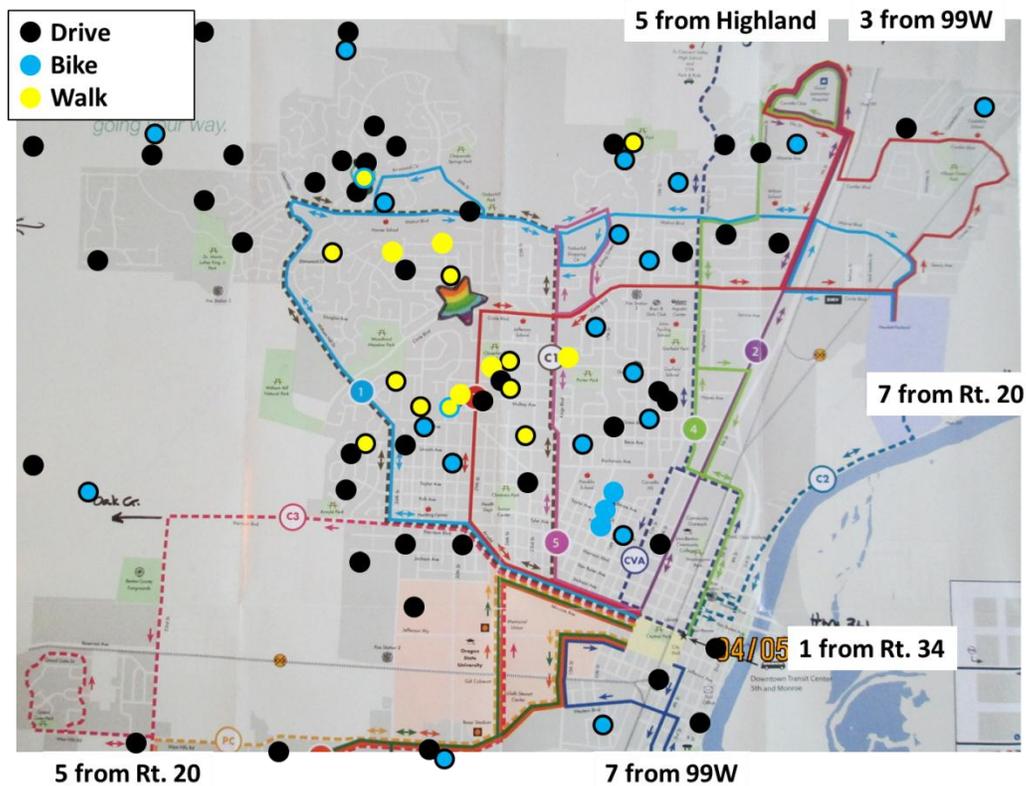
## Where Do We Travel From?

The active members and friends of this congregation are dominantly (84%) from Corvallis, with 392 members and friends having north Corvallis zip codes and 86 from south Corvallis (Exhibit 4).

**Exhibit 4. Membership and active friends by zip code.** Generated from our mailing list for members (326) and active friends.

392	NORTH CORVALLIS
86	SOUTH CORVALLIS
30	ALBANY-TANGENT
17	PHILOMATH
8	LEBANON-SWEET HOME
8	MONMOUTH
4	SALEM-SCIO
4	EUGENE-MONROE
17	MISC

An unscientific sample of Sunday attendance during March 2015 reflects this pattern spatially (Exhibit 5).



**Exhibit 5. March 2015 commuting pattern (113 people),** showing distance/direction with dominant mode of transport: driving in black, biking in blue, walking in yellow, as well as relatively even combinations. Using the Corvallis Transit System map shows the potential for future Sunday route service (currently not available) using routes #1, #5 and #7.

## Future Trends to Consider:

There has been an overall slow steady population increase since 1980 in Oregon, especially in urban areas, with projections of continued population increases of just over 1% growth per year through 2020. Demographic trends favor a generally older population, consistent with national trends (Population Research Center at Portland State University <http://www.pdx.edu/prc/population-estimates-0> )

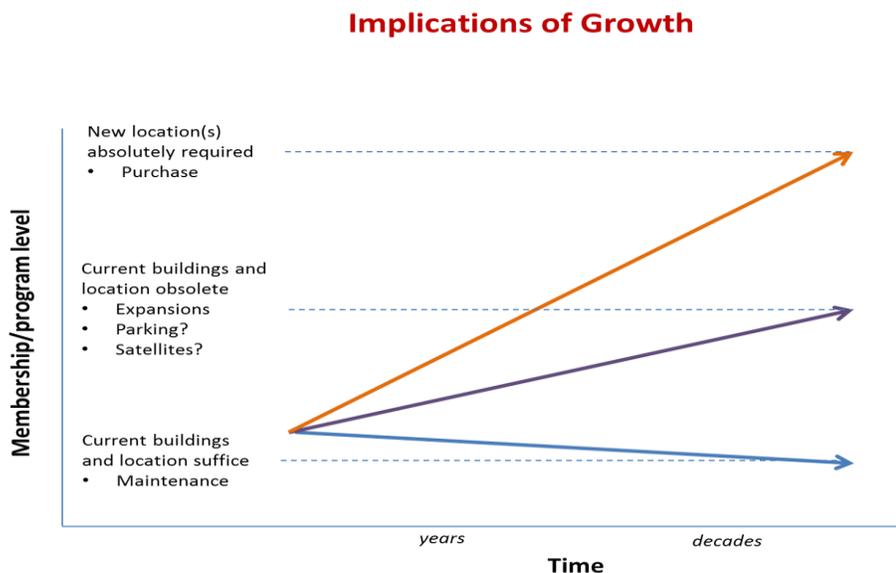
Overall the UUA and its congregations are not really growing nationally; however, several dozen congregations of all sizes across the continent are growing. Mid-size congregations are where the most growth overall has been in the last decade. The components of growing congregations continue to include **adequate facilities**, strong **diverse worship**, commitment to be **visible in the community** and a strong **religious education** for all ages (Rev. Dr. Ken Brown, Congregational Life Staff Pacific Southwest District). A study of religious and social trends in the US (Faith Formation 2020) indicated a decline in participation in formal churches and organized religion, in general. American society is becoming more individualistic – contributing to privatized religiosity – with many older Americans seeking opportunities to engage in new knowledge, experiences and service as part of their spiritual path (see Appendix 1).

And globally there is a decline in "traditional" congregational-style ministry and growth in community-based congregations that focus on serving the larger community through social action work. This is especially true in places where sources of funding are more dispersed due to poorer members, less robust economies, fewer trusts & endowments or limited government funding streams (Rev. Jill McAllister). These trends could partially explain the plateau in Sunday morning attendance; membership and program are expanding *outside of* Sunday services.

## Options in 2015 – Where are we going?

We present two alternatives to the vision established by the 2008 Master Plan (Exhibit 6) to aid in our thoughts and discussions. These three options cumulatively can be viewed as the merger of expected rates of growth as that growth interacts with how we accommodate the congregation physically in order to fulfill our mission:

**Explore – Love – Act.**



**Exhibit 6 – Alternative growth scenarios.** We assume the current membership/program level is between some level adequately supported by the current buildings and a level that would demand an expansion similar to that proposed in the 2008 Master Plan.

- A. Low growth.** Despite first impressions, this scenario does not assume loss of membership and program size; rather, we assume a shift in membership and program to other supported locations in and around Corvallis (i.e. satellite Fellowships and/or other facilities that support our growing membership and mission. Even with this option, however, the “home” building on Circle Boulevard would require some improvements and maintenance, but these would likely total ~\$300,000 over the coming decade.
- B. Modest growth.** This scenario assumes expansion into a facility like that envisioned in the 2008 Master Plan. Such a \$2.5M-effort would consume the focus/energy/time/money of the current generation likely for the next decade or two – and be our gift to the next generation as we have been the recipients of the current building from those in the 1980s (actually, many of us were part of that!).
- C. High growth.** This scenario assumes such rapid and sustained growth that any intermediate expansion on the current property becomes unwise – why tie up our energy and resources in an expansion that we quickly fill and which may then preclude a move for another decade?

### Land Use and Real Estate Implications (B and C alternatives)

Alternative B would involve obtaining Conditional Development approval in public hearing before the City Planning Commission. This is a land use action requiring notification of surrounding property owners within 300 feet; and the decision is appealable. The timeline is six months to a year, and the outcome is not guaranteed.

Parking would certainly need expansion with Alternative B; however, there is no simple formula for calculating required parking in advance of specific building dimensions and uses. We would no doubt be required to add to our existing lot similar to the 2008 Master Plan and perhaps beyond. This scenario would certainly include making a clear case regarding the numbers of our members that walk and bike predictably to church and could include: 1) plans for a shuttle service from a nearby commercial parking lot; or 2) purchase of additional land in the neighborhood for “green” parking. We can still make the case that, generally, we are good neighbors relative to competing uses for the lot were we to sell (i.e. a residential or student housing subdivision).

Alternative C would involve marketing our current property for which the County Assessor has assigned a Real Market Value of \$3.1M. This property’s highest value would most likely be based on its potential for residential development. In our current zoning, “RS-3.5,” two to six units per acre are allowed, and our property is 2.17 acres; therefore, two to 13 homes could be built after subdividing the property. Apartments would not be allowed under the current zoning, but re-zoning to allow multi-family dwellings is a possibility, and would probably realize the highest property value.

Concurrent with sale of our property, we would be shopping for alternative locations – currently available sites (vacant Corvallis area land up to 10 acres in size) are briefly outlined in Exhibit 7. New construction on any new location would involve Conditional Use land use review similar to that noted above in Alternative B. Existing large commercial space is currently available for lease (e.g. the old CH2M-Hill Building) but perhaps could be purchased.

**Exhibit 7. Potential bare-land sites** available for purchase in and near Corvallis as of February 22, 2015, as examples. The marketplace changes rapidly in terms of availability and prices.

7.31 acres	SW Brooklane Dr.	Mary’s River waterfront, and floodplain	\$190,000
7.54 acres	Highway 34 (east)	Linn County, across the bridge	\$325,000
5.12 acres	NW Chaparral Dr.	Past Bald Hill, gravel roads, steep	\$185,000
6.2 acres	Soap Creek Rd.	Past Lewisburg Saddle, floodplain	\$125,000

## Conclusion

Our assessment is not designed to favor a given rate of growth in membership or program, or to favor particular future structures that facilitate our mission. However, since the publication of our draft report, there has been a clear sentiment to NOT leave the existing property. Other excellent feedback to consider:

- 1) Entice members and friends without children to attend the 9:30am service to alleviate near-term Sunday morning pressure and a more open, welcoming feel to 11:00am services;
- 2) Continue our excellent process for scheduling the facilities for myriad ongoing programs – no one can assume that a room will be available - ever; and
- 3) Consider hiring a consultant (similar to how the Eugene congregation advanced their process) to help us refine our 5-year objectives regarding future structures.

There is no easy and clear choice, but we have alternatives and the energy to act, and we have been blessed by the vision and resources of our UUFC ancestors. Continued solicitation of input from the congregation is recommended (and ongoing) at this point.

*Respectfully submitted by:*

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## Appendix I. Thirteen religious and social trends in the US:

1. Declining participation in a formal church/organized religion resulting in less exposure to traditions.
2. Increase in those who have no religious affiliation reduces the societal role of congregations in life-cycle events, such as marriage and funerals.
3. Majority of people who identify as being “spiritual” not “religious”, therefore uninterested in organized religion.
4. Influence of individualism contributing to “privatized religiosity” and a decreased need for a religious affiliation as part of identity.
5. Increase in social, cultural and religious diversity.
6. Growing influence of Hispanic/Latino faith beliefs and the increase in congregations with services in Spanish.
7. Less interest in commitments or ties to social institutions especially among individuals in the 18-30 year old range.
8. Emergence of a distinctive post-boomer (age 20-40) faith and spirituality in which individuals piece together religious and spiritual choices both inside and outside of traditional religious institutions and seek close-knit physical communities in which their individual spiritual quest is mediated through artistic or service oriented work.
9. Changing structures and patterns of family life including delaying marriage, having fewer children later in life, fewer children in two-parent households, increase in unmarried couples living together, more time spent caring for children.
10. Rediscovering the influence of parents and families religious lives on the involvement of youth in a religion.
11. Use of digital technology in all aspects of our lives.
12. Incorporating new ideas in teaching and education that help people manage a fast-changing knowledge based society.
13. Increase in adults > age 65. By 2050, 1 in 5 Americans will be older than 65. This new stage of life between adult midlife and old age spans several decades and these adults seek opportunities to engage in new knowledge, experiences, community and service.

From: John Roberto (2012) *Faith Formation 2020 – Designing the Future of Faith Formation*