



RISING TO THE OCCASION

Mack Dennis, Senior Pastor

Across the nearly two hundred years of our congregation's history, the First Baptist Church of Asheville has risen to the challenges of the day. During its early years as a fledgling congregation "lacking an adequate meeting house," through the glory days of the 20th century, and in the crucible of this present time, the crises of each age have a way of becoming distilled in our congregational life.¹ Whether the call has been to navigate the Great Depression or World Wars, to stand up for Civil Rights or against denominational control, to embrace downtown Asheville, or to discern a more generous welcome for our neighbors, this good church has met each challenge as a faithful, public witness of God's love for the world.

Today, we are called again to make a crucial decision, and again during a pivotal moment in the history of our city, nation, and world. Though the weight of combined crises and challenges stresses all of us, and nicks away at the already fragile fabric of congregations and other community-oriented institutions, First Baptist has been entrusted with a choice that has the potential to lift up people's hearts, give them hope, and provide opportunities for a better life.

After nearly five years of dreaming and discerning, our congregational leaders—the Campus Master Plan

Committee and the Deacons—have recommended to the church an exciting community development proposal. This recommendation is the culmination of years of careful planning and conscientious leadership by trusted church members. It's also the result of inspiring and collaborative conversations with our neighbors, the YMCA of Western North Carolina, with whom we share a common city block, and a common passion for resurrection faith, affordable housing, hunger relief, childcare, and other programs of social uplift.

Together with the Y, we've partnered with The Furman Company of Greenville, SC, to help us dream about the future of our city block, and reimagine our respective properties as a thriving new neighborhood. On **March 27th, at 2:00 p.m.**, Furman will present their proposal to the congregation at a town hall meeting in the Sanctuary. After allowing five weeks for further discussion through organized small group opportunities, we will hold a called conference to vote in view of the proposal following worship on **May 1**.

This will be one of the most significant congregational decisions our church has ever made, or will ever make. Now it is in your hands. So, with a glad heart, and with confidence in the Holy Spirit's guidance, I invite you to take time for prayer and thoughtful consideration of the decision set before us.

Mack

¹ Charles Deweese, *The Power of Freedom: First Baptist Church, Asheville, North Carolina, 18-27-1997* (Franklin, TN: Providence House Publishers, 1997) 59.



“This church has a long tradition of great mission callings and wonderful visions of what we might do for God’s work and this community. We need to weigh this decision carefully, and do our due diligence as we consider our options. But I hope we are willing to take steps to grow our income so we can accomplish God’s work that lies before us.”

~Wayne Jewsbury

“As a teenager I remember parking the family car on a gravel lot on what is now I-240. My mother, father, sisters and I would wave to the families that lived at the edge of the parking lot. Wouldn’t it be wonderful to be in the center of a thriving community again?”

~Clark Pennell

“I’m thrilled we can use our resources to provide workforce housing in an area that is so unaffordable to live. I love the idea of bringing back community to our church neighborhood. The prospect that people can affordably live and work in this area and not rely on fossil fuels to get places is exciting. Walking or riding bikes for transportation is healthier for bodies and the Earth. I’m looking forward to walking over and welcoming my new neighbors.”

~Kirstin Austin



MEET OUR PARTNERS

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The Furman Co. has provided comprehensive solutions in real estate for over 125 years. In 1888, the founders of our company paved the way for local development, education, and growth in commerce. Today, we continue the tradition of local expertise while offering a network of services.

Our expertise is strategically focused on: Real Estate Development & Real Estate Investment Advisory Services. The Furman Co.’s mission is to deliver sophisticated advisory services with integrity and quality assurance, creating sustainable value for our clients, employees, and community.

Every day we apply our insight, experience, intelligence, and resources to help clients make informed real estate decisions. Our mission is to deliver superior results to you by collaborating across markets and service lines, thinking collaboratively, but acting practically, and keeping our clients first.

YMCA OF WNC



The YMCA of WNC is committed to strengthening the foundations of community through programming that supports youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. Our programs nurture the greatness in every child, promote well-being throughout the community, and give back to our neighbors in need. All of this work is rooted in our four core values of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility.

Our mission is to put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind, and body for all. It guides us in all we do and compels us to embrace, reflect, and celebrate the richness of diversity within each other and our community.



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF ASHEVILLE IS POISED TO BECOME THE HEART OF A THRIVING NEW DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD.

PLAN AT-A-GLANCE

WHAT WE HAVE...

- An aging, but essential, income-producing asset in One Oak
- Nearly five acres of underutilized land on both Woodfin and Oak Street with an appraised value of over \$10 million.

WHAT WE HOPE FOR...

- Increased revenues for community missions and capital needs
- Visibility and access to church
- Low level of risk



WHAT'S PROPOSED...

- A holistic village with housing, retail, and office space that is developed in two phases, and identifies revenue sources through,
 - the sale of 1/2 acre and,
 - retention of the remaining land through ground leases which provides additional long-term income stream.

THE PROJECT, AS IT IS CURRENTLY PROPOSED, WILL TAKE APPROXIMATELY SEVEN YEARS TO FULLY REALIZE, AND IS GENERALLY THOUGHT OF IN TWO PHASES.

PHASE I

- The property beyond the current first row of parking near the Atrium entrance could be redeveloped to include a new facility for our partners at the YMCA, a green space/park on the top of a parking deck, office and retail space, and housing.
- On the 1/2 acre sold, a commercial structure that would include significant housing could be constructed under approved uses already allowed by the City.

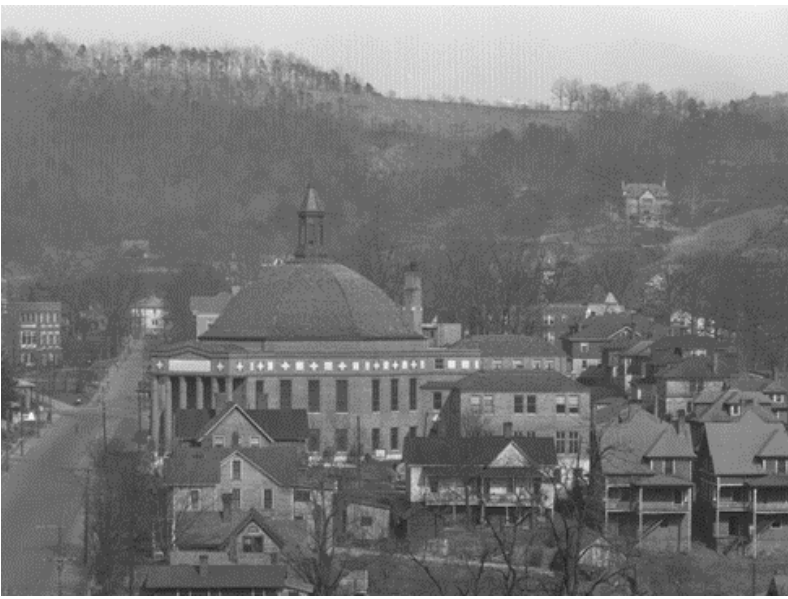


PHASE II

(which would begin only after the new facilities for the YMCA have been completed and are available for their occupancy)

- Includes development of property beyond the Sanctuary entrance down through and including the current YMCA property.
- Features the majority of affordable housing units, two office buildings, and retail (possibly including entrepreneurial and business incubator spaces) wrapping around the base of a second parking garage, and green space in a walkable, village setting.

Bricks and mortar are only one part of the overall plan. In our assessment of the possibilities, we have discovered that the Y and FBCA are effectively kindred spirits in ministry. We have several common interests that could be combined or expanded to provide new, life-changing programs. These might include childcare, hunger relief, the Academy for the Arts, and the proposed First Shine Learning Center. We believe the opportunities to partner with other downtown churches to share resources and programming can reach a broad swath of our historically disenfranchised and marginalized neighbors.



A DYNAMIC HISTORY

This timeline illustrates that from the Reconstruction Era until the end of the twentieth century, First Baptist Church of Asheville has responded to timely opportunities for property development and we have a history of growing and changing with the community.

1829 - Church Beginning - In the years to follow in four different locations and under different names, the church that was to become First Baptist Church of Asheville was established.

1871 - Completion of Sanctuary at Spruce and Woodfin. (roughly in the present Renaissance Hotel parking lot)

1880 - Trains from the east roll into Asheville, sparking an explosion in the town's population.

1892 - Completion of Sanctuary at Spruce and College.

Beginning in 1923, church leaders discussed the sale of the current building and launched a search for a new building site.

1924 - The old Cherokee Inn becomes available and is offered to the church as a "take it or leave it, right now" deal. We accepted.

1927 - Present Sanctuary is dedicated.

1930 - Asheville's population is over 50,000. Early years of the Great Depression. Asheville's economy begins a long and slow decline for 30 years. Buncombe County experiences a boom in tobacco production which gives the local rural economy support.

1949 - Federal Housing Act created the Urban Renewal program with the intention of redeveloping areas of cities deemed blighted.

1951 - Church votes to purchase property at 333 Charlotte Street to serve as pastorium.

1953 - Church purchases Latta Nurses' Home to convert to Youth Building.

Late 1950s - Future Development Committee established for the purpose of securing land for the future growth of FBCA. About this same time Asheville begins planning a "Civic Redevelopment Project."

1964 - The church begins to feel effects of the deterioration or demolition of residential neighborhoods

near the church and the exodus to the suburbs or county of many of its most loyal members, as a result of its location in an Urban Renewal District.

After acknowledging that "our church has lost most of its parking space by reason of acquisition by the NC Highway Commission for the Asheville Expressway,... the Board of Deacons (are) directed and empowered to acquire, by purchase, gift or lease, any and all properties near or close to the church, which they may regard by majority vote, as suitable or convenient for parking purposes."

In August 1964, church votes to sell five pieces of property on Woodfin Street and College Park Place to the Urban Redevelopment Commission to "secure sufficient land for 500 parking spaces along with land needed for expansion."

1968 - Church votes to sell two lots across Woodfin Street to Urban Redevelopment Commission.

1971 - Future Development Committee requests and church approves entering into negotiations to sell Youth Building.

1973 - After learning that David Millard Junior High School, at the corner of Oak and College streets, would be torn down to make way for Charlotte Street extension, church purchases former school property.

1976 - Church votes to purchase a tract of land between the church and YMCA.

1978 - Church authorizes the construction of the Family Ministries Center.

1993 - Church purchases One Oak Plaza to provide for future growth needs in what was described by W.O. Brazil, Jr. as a "significant faith leap...in the midst of potential peril this church has, in faith, opted to stake its hope in the future..."

