

# Before You Build

## Important Questions to Consider for Church Facility Design Meetings

By Dale Reiser

The old adage suggests that the worst question is the one that is not asked. In planning a new facility or addition to your existing church building, many key questions will help to guide your team toward a successful project. Following is a checklist of key questions with guidelines that will help to get the “creative juices” flowing. Your design/builder will best be able to serve your congregation by having your answers to these questions as you are considering facility expansion.

### Design

**What ministry elements that are special to your congregation will most influence the design parameters of your church?**

- ▶ Target audience
- ▶ Church culture
- ▶ Ministry or outreach focus
- ▶ Location of your property

**How do you want to look to those that see you? What message do you want your facility to convey to the public?**

- ▶ Friendly and warm
- ▶ Formal and highly organized
- ▶ Open to visitors
- ▶ Part of the community
- ▶ A congregation that is ready to serve

**What influences will define design parameters?**

- ▶ Size of land
- ▶ Local building restrictions and regulations
- ▶ Traffic patterns
- ▶ Do you see a new facility that is traditional, contemporary or flexible?
- ▶ Will you have large fellowship gatherings, for example the need for kitchen use or a fellowship hall?
- ▶ Will you be incorporating a multi-purpose facility or a sanctuary and separate family life facility?
- ▶ What is your anticipated worship attendance? Will you include one service or numerous?
- ▶ What level of finishes are you considering: high end or simple yet flexible?

**What can we as a congregation be thinking of now that will facilitate a seamless, cost-effective design well into the future?**

- ▶ Can we plan for future expansion?
- ▶ Is the land suitable for future expansion?
- ▶ Can we afford to incorporate maintenance-free materials now? Can we afford not to?
- ▶ How can we design a facility today that, if added on to in the future, will generally look as if it were built today?



**Inclusion of an auditorium stage was one focus of the design for Living Springs Community Church in Glenwood, Ill.**



**Currently under construction, West Ridge Community Church in Elgin, Ill. features a contemporary design.**

**Planning & Strategy**

- ▶ What is the realistic growth plan for the congregation?
- ▶ What is the vision of the church?
- ▶ What are the short-term, mid- and long-term plans for the church?
- ▶ How does the present growth trend affect current physical plant constraints?
- ▶ When is the optimal time to provide expanded facilities for continued growth of your congregation?
- ▶ Do you expand in multiple phases, if so how many and approximately when?

**What are the demographics of your congregation and your geographic area? How do these demographics affect planning?**

- ▶ What is your ministry and worship focus: youth, music, adult studies, small groups, café, local outreach or missions?
- ▶ What are the growth trends in these focus areas and how do you see them or want them to change?
- ▶ How is the present trend affecting startup of facility expansion?

**Finance**

**What is the financial capacity of the church?**

- ▶ Is this capacity congruent with your budget?
- ▶ What is the best timetable given present and anticipated growth and financial ability to start your new facility?
- ▶ How will your climate affect your timing, costs, decision making and, most importantly, start up of a new facility or expansion?

**How are you going to finance a new facility or expansion?**

- ▶ Fund raising
- ▶ Fundraising in combination with conventional financing
- ▶ Other means

Should you handle the capital program in house or hire an outside professional? Do you have adequate resources in house to handle a campaign that will be necessary to enthruse and inform your congregation? ❖

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*Dale Reiser is president of Professional Building Services Inc. (PBS). Founded in 1990, Professional Building Services, Inc. (PBS) is a design/build general contractor providing a customer-centered approach in the Illinois and Indiana commercial, industrial and institutional markets. More information is available on PBS by visiting its Website at [www.pbsdesignbuild.com](http://www.pbsdesignbuild.com), or by calling 708.672.4010. PBS is honored to be a member of the National Association of Church Design Builders (NACDB). Additional information on church building can be found on the organization's Website, [www.nacdb.com](http://www.nacdb.com), or by calling 817.461.1830.*