

Facility Selecting for Church Planters

Fellowship Baptist Church Building
Consulting Ministries

Helping Churches Do Their Job

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When the church plant has grown to the point of needing to move out of their incubator facility, often they have not grown to the point of being able to select a final location for the church. They need time for continued numerical growth and for continued financial growth and stability. An intermediary facility is used, allowing the church plant the time necessary to accomplish these tasks. When making the choice of an intermediary or permanent facility, discernment is needed so that the facility is not too large nor is it too small.

Before any decision is made concerning a rented or purchased facility or property, the church planter should have developed a ministry plan. Short term and long term goals should be established so that a building can be chosen which will facilitate the church in achieving its goals.

There are several areas that must be addressed when considering which facility to choose.

1. Finances

- What can you afford?
- Should you rent or buy?
- What expenses will be incurred with each potential facility?
 1. mortgage/rent
 2. capital improvements (remodeling costs)
 3. insurances (fire, liability, property damage, etc.)
 4. utilities
 5. cleaning equipment and supplies
 6. parking lot maintenance
 7. building upkeep

2. Consideration of renting verses buying

- Renting may relieve some maintenance expenses.
- Buying gains equity while you are saving for your dream facility.

3. Size of Facility Needed

- Auditorium (expected seating capacity)
- Sunday school rooms--size, quantity needed
- Fellowship/multi-purpose area
- Offices--pastor, church staff
- Off-street parking

Typical size recommendations for Baptist churches are:

- Auditoriums: 14 sq. ft./seat
- Sunday school rooms:
20 sq. ft./person
- Restroom facilities: number of units--minimum 2 (must include provisions for handicapped)

4. Future growth

How large can the church grow at this facility? Is it expandable? Consider this before you sign an agreement.

5. Location

When looking for a facility remember that location is important. The perfect building at a bad location may not be the best choice.

6. Type of buildings that are conducive to adaptation for church use:

- Large open area on one level
- Adequate off-street parking
- Built-in infrastructure (heat & A/C)

Example: small supermarkets

7. Zoning

Check the zoning codes/restrictions **BEFORE** signing a contract.

8. Code Compliancy

- Change of use
- Safety code
- Accessibility

When acquiring a used building you will have to comply with assembly criteria before occupying the facility. Significant expense can be incurred in order to comply with building codes.

9. Get an occupancy permit for whatever facility you plan to occupy.

10. City Officials

Get to know your city/town officials (mayor, police, council members, etc.); they can be your friends or a hindrance.

11. Show that you are not some "wild cult" but are bringing benefit and blessing to the community.

12. Ask for professional help to review your proposed rental/purchase **BEFORE** you sign an agreement.

Professional help can be defined as engineer, architect, builder, lawyer, surveyor, planner, etc. It can not be emphasized enough that you get a second or third opinion from a sympathetic, qualified person that has experience in the building business before you make a commitment on a property. This will help preclude much agony, prayer and otherwise, over the facility in the future. Building codes and zoning laws today are far more stringent and enforced more diligently than they have been in the past. Do not assume that you will get a "pass" because you are a church.



Fellowship Baptist Church Building Consulting Ministry

Fellowship Baptist Church of Dalton, PA, has recognized that John and Susan Scondras have been called of the Lord to use their abilities as church building consultants. FBC has sent John, who is a licensed professional engineer, and Susan to a ministry that is vital to the enhancement of today's Baptist churches. The ministry endeavors to help Baptist church plants through competent facility planning. They have been involved in this ministry since 1978. The ministry partners with the pastor and church leaders to help them plan the facility that they need in order to meet the needs of their "flock" and a facility that they can use to reach out to the community. The ministry helps to plan a facility that meets the current needs and resources of the church as well as planning for future growth by providing:

- site planning,
- evaluation of existing facilities
- planning for church expansion
- dealing with accessibility requirements and other codes compliance issues,
- considerations for general upgrades of existing facility .