



Urban Church Campus Concept Overview

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July 2022

Executive Summary

The design of many traditional urban church campuses result in:

- High operating costs
- Poor property usage
- Lack of community engagement

By redesigning the traditional urban church campus from a single-use design to a “community center” multi-use model, churches will better steward their financial and physical resources and better engage and serve their local communities.

Churches will also expand their impact and influence from strategic partnerships between church staff, Christian business members and community leaders.

Problem Statement: A Stewardship & Community Engagement Void



“Why should I give money to build a new church building that will be closed most of the week, is located on the outskirts of the city and which most members of the community will never have a reason to visit? Is there a better stewardship option?”

A traditional urban (or suburban) church campus in the United States shares a variety of common characteristics: a location on the edge or town, an expensive facility paid for by member contributions (or external fundraising grants) and is closed for multiple days each week. Unless members of the community attend the church, there is no opportunity to interact, attend or visit the church’s physical campus.

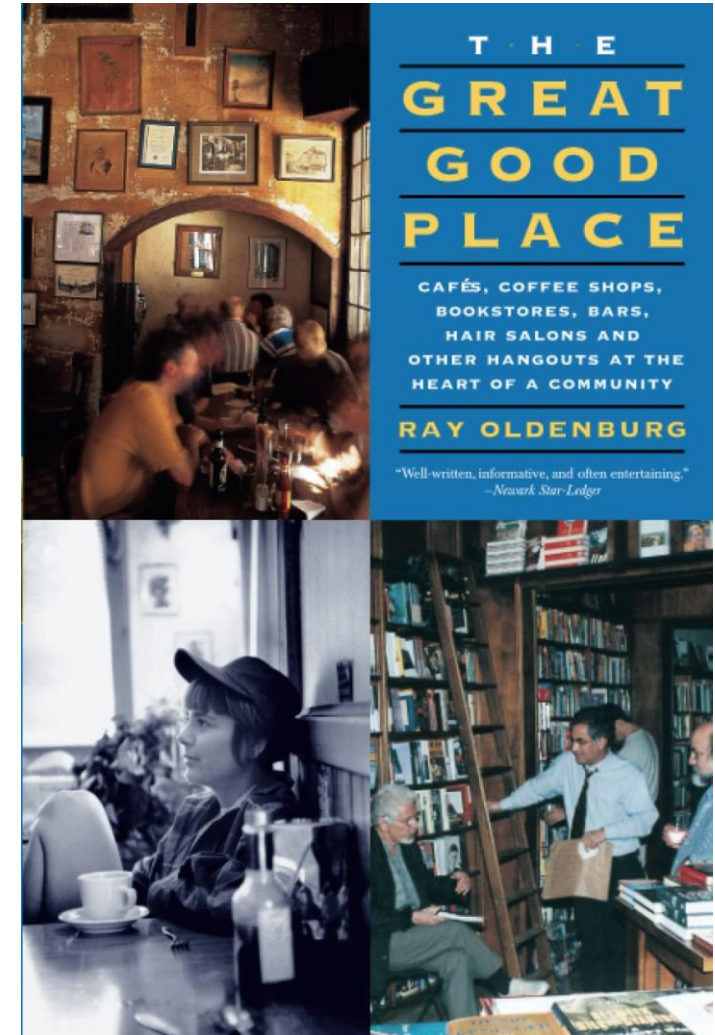
This represents a significant lack of stewardship of physical, financial and relational resources. A redesign of the single-use traditional church campus to a multi-use “community center” style campus would result in better physical space utilization, financial stewardship (including operational sustainability and missions-funding maximization) and present many outreach opportunities within the community.

The Need to Design “Third Places” to Integrate Community and Influence Culture

"Third places," or "great good places," are the many public places where people can gather, put aside the concerns of home and work (their first and second places), and hang out simply for the pleasures of good company and lively conversation. They are the heart of a community's social vitality and the grassroots of a democracy. – Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place*

Examples of “third places”: churches, community centers, country clubs, cafes, coffee shops, bars, salons, gyms, etc.

The urban church in America has the opportunity to redesign the modern urban church “third place” campus away from isolated buildings to multi-use facilities to build intersectional community, engage & influence local culture and maximize financial impact through community funded sources & services (vs. solely member donation funded).



Urban Church Campus: Case for Change



Traditional Church Campus



Multi-Use Church Campus
("Capital Turnaround," National Community Church)

Factor	Traditional Church Campus Model	Urban Community Center/Hybrid Model
Location	Edge of town	Center of town
Look & Feel	Like a church (or a member's only "country club")	Like a community center (and multi-branded)
Accessibility	Out of the way of community	Integrated with community
Use	Single-use	Multi-use
Tenant	Church	Various
Community Involvement	Church members	Community citizens
Relationship w/Community	Isolated	Engaged & integrated
Operating Hours	Sunday morning	Every day
Seed Funding	Member donations, external seed contribution	Member donations, seed contribution, business investment or municipal investment
Operations Funding	Member donations	Lease & services revenue

Example #1: Ebenezer's Coffeehouse

- Abandoned crack house, purchased by National Community Church in 2002
- Church owned & managed, independently branded
- Location: NE Washington, DC, corner of residential neighborhood, across street from SEC HQ building, two blocks from Union Station
- Space: 1st level coffee shop, 2nd level church office space, basement level performance space
- Performance space has been used for church campus, musicians on tour, event space rental, etc.
- Coffeehouse generated profits fund church missions
- Site: www.ebenezerscoffeehouse.com



Example #2: Miracle Theatre

- Inline theater, acquired by National Community Church in 2011
- Church owned & managed, independently branded
- Location: SE Washington, DC, Barracks Row, one block from historic Marine Barracks
- Space: 371 theater seat theater, 500 total capacity
- Use: Performance space used for church sermons (church campus), second run movie theater and price event rental
- Theater generated profits fund church missions
- Site: www.themiracletheatre.com



Example #3: Capital Turnaround

- Converted historic Navy Yard Car Barn, acquired by National Community Church in 2014
- Church owned & managed, independently branded
- Location: SE Washington, DC
- Renovated space for large church campus, state-of-the-art event with spaces for hosting retreats, corporate meetings, conferences, parties and other social events.
- Site: <https://national.cc/expressions/capital-turnaround>



Example #4: Shopping Center Campus

- Venture Church, Keller, TX (near Ft. Worth)
- Shopping center anchor space owned and operated for church services
- Church space currently shared/sublet with performing arts organization
- Church pursuing purchase of entire shopping center (upfront investment) and co-investment with local municipality for renovations
- Leases from existing tenants (fast food, bank, retail, office space) would subsidize church operations
- Available space could be used by kingdom-minded businesses to complement church mission
- Site: <https://venturechurch.net/>



Example #5: Mini-Shopping Center (notional)

Notional Campus Opportunity

- Abandoned mini-shopping building near downtown Dallas, TX ([Greenville Ave & Southwestern Blvd](#))
- Currently six individual tenant spaces
- Mini-shopping building on the edge of very busy & popular Old Town Shopping Center
- Next door to 15K resident Village Apartments (majority young professionals)
- One block from Hwy 75
- Would require significant upfront investment & renovation, but would be high visibility and high traffic for multi-use property



Investment/Partnership Options

- 1. Church Owned & Managed Multi-Use Space (e.g. Local, single expression)**
 - Church ownership of space
 - **Pro:** Full church control for space use, including determining complementary mix of uses
 - **Con:** Mixed use property management & financial oversight responsibility, assumption of liability
- 2. Separate Kingdom Real Estate Organization (e.g. Local, multiple expression)**
 - Separate kingdom-minded real estate organization (business or non-profit) plans & designs concept with church; owns & manages properties, leases space to tenants, including church entity
 - **Pro:** Church doesn't have to manage additional properties or assume liability
 - **Con:** Partnership with real estate organization must be maintained for kingdom impact
- 3. Real estate trust (e.g. Local/regional, multiple expression)**
 - Kingdom-minded real estate trust owns all properties
 - **Pro:** Subject matter expertise & economies of scale, possibility to “franchise” similar concepts
 - **Con:** High need for integrity & accountability of real estate trust

Multi-Use Space Examples (Endless Options!)



- Conference space (for church services & corporate events)
- Church office space
- Coffee shop/bar (community meeting place, happy hours)
- Restaurant
- Catering company (cater events on and off campus)
- School
- Daycare
- Child development center
- Career resource center
- Co-working space
- Business office space
- Boutique theatre/performing arts space
- Gym or sports club
- Convenience store
- Printing company
- Art studio/gallery
- Shops
- Chapel (weddings, funerals, community chaplain resource)

Common Objections

- **What if we receive a request to use a space for a reason that is biblically objectionable? Would our church be forced to comply or (alternatively) face a lawsuit?**
 - Perhaps one approach is think of the physical space as a Christian business intent on serving the public well (legally, ethically and excellently), and the church as any ministry opportunities which take place inside or outside the physical space. A legal team should be used to determine the appropriate legal entity (or entities) and also to limit any potential liability – as would be appropriate for any organization.
 - A business's service (Christian or otherwise) does not equate to endorsement of customer's activities.
 - It's also important to consider that every business (Christian or otherwise) incurs risk simply by operating (for issues which may or may not occur), but a church that declines a multi-use opportunity forfeits opportunities steward financial and physical resources and impact the community. Which approach carries the greater reward, given the risks?
- **It's hard enough to run a church without the hassle of owning and managing multiple properties!**
 - You're right! In that case, it may be best to create or partner with a Kingdom-minded real estate organization to handle the business, property management and/or financial operations. Are there Christian business leaders in your church or community who would like to be involved in partnership with your church's leadership team? Is there an existing entity that can help partner in this way?

Common Objections

- **How will I know what types of uses to include?**
 - That’s the beauty of it, no two expressions will be the same and you get to make the choice! Our advice is to seek God in prayer, get input from the community and assess the talent of your congregation’s business leaders (would any of them want to be a tenant/partner?). Then create a plan that incorporates complementary use concepts (e.g. a catering space would match well with a conference space; a coffee shop would match well with a co-working space).
- **Why would someone want to visit a Church-branded business? Wouldn’t that just be cheesy?**
 - First of all, it’s perfectly fine to offer generic office space for a generic office tenant. (If your facility has extra office space leased by local businesses, the lease revenue can still be used to fund church operations, even if it doesn’t “feel” special or extraordinary.) That may be easier than trying to design each use concept. But if you do want to design each concept (or add them over time), here’s a thought: why brand them overtly “Christian” at all? Why not brand the individual use concepts in a unique and expressive manner that emphasizes the purpose, quality or service you want the community to experience? As they engage and the relationship grows (i.e. maybe they drink the “coffee with a cause”) it will present more opportunities to engage with other uses on the campus, including church services.