

UCV redevelopment forum/meeting – Sharing Your Concerns circle

March 31, 2019, 12:30-2:00pm

Flipcharts Summary / Meeting Report

INTRODUCTION

At least 35 different attendees were counted at the Sharing Your Concerns circle on March 31, 2019. Some came late, some left early, most stayed. Twenty people signed an email list that was passed around at the end of the meeting so that they can continue to share information and ideas about the issues and ideas raised at the forum. (This group is open to any congregants – contact rdainow@gmail.com)

The forum was, as advertised, a listening circle. Each person had the talking stick for up to 2 minutes to share their questions and concerns about the ongoing UCV site redevelopment project. We recorded these questions and concerns on flipcharts. (Images of these flipcharts and a transcription of the flipchart notes is available on request from rdainow@gmail.com.)

Some forum participants have previously spoken against the redevelopment project and continue to oppose it. Most participants are undecided and have some concerns or ambivalence about the current redevelopment project and process. At least five persons did not express any concerns about the project, with three of them speaking instead of their confidence in the redevelopment process and the redevelopment team, and two simply wanting to listen and learn. At least two others (Reverend Steven Epperson and Board President Leonie Armstrong) expressed concern about the need for a ‘broader’ conversation surrounding the site redevelopment project and their support and encouragement for this Sunday forum as part of that process.

RESULTS

This document groups and tabulates the flipchart notes as a way to analyze and summarize the concerns that were shared at the forum meeting and the ideas put forward for possible next steps.

The participant comments recorded on the flipcharts fall into eight categories (three of these are grouped together as ‘Practical project risks’):

- Site redevelopment process (11)
- Vision (8)

Practical project risks

- Timing (7)
- Existential threats – membership, money (4)
- During construction (2)
- Affordable housing (7)
- Design elements (6)
- Commitment to follow project to successful completion (5)

Site redevelopment process (11)

More people (11) expressed concern about the site redevelopment process than about any other concern. Since the invitation to this forum was for those “uneasy about plans for redevelopment at UCV”, it is no surprise that attendees were, indeed, uneasy.

The flipchart notes on concerns about the site redevelopment process speak for themselves:

- *process - want to see a clear, shared path for discussion, deliberation, decision*
- *need good case – business, indigenous, social, etc – no super rush*
- *rushing in without clarity*
- *remain respectful/conversational as we move forward*
- *not sure everyone is being heard*
- *not enough communication to congregation*
- *repressing differing opinions = recipe for dissension later on*
- *afraid of factionalism [splitting the congregation]*
- *no involvement of indigenous people*
- *[not yet any] input from younger (potential) members*
- *no involvement of young, creative architects*

Vision (8)

Eight persons expressed concern because they have not yet seen or heard a clear vision for the redevelopment project, a vision that embodies and champions UU values.

Three persons shared a concern that they have not yet seen any clear and compelling vision in the current project plans; two others are concerned because they have not yet seen UU idealism reflected in current redevelopment project documents – not environmentally, not architecturally, and not for social justice. “Where are our values?” asked one person. Another commented that “We need an imperative, not just a reason.” The 20 participants at March 31 meeting who provided their email addresses reviewed an earlier version of this report to ensure that their comments were accurately reported. One provided this clarification: “This could be a really exciting project if we throw all our values into it... I'd like our building to be a full expression of our values. To lead with our values.”

Practical project risks

Timing (7)

Seven persons raised timing as a concern. The most common concern was how the timing of this redevelopment project overlaps substantially with the timeline of finding and hiring an interim and then a settled minister (minimum three years from now). One respondent called the timing a “show-stopper” until there is a settled minister.

Existential threats - membership, money (4)

Four persons were concerned because they have not yet learned enough about the capacity of this congregation to complete and sustain this project into the future.

- *This project threatens the future survival of UCV.*
- *Will we be able to sustain possible loss of membership from the havoc and stress of simultaneously undertaking the search for a new settled minister (minimum 3 year process) AND undertaking a major redevelopment project?*
- *Our current congregation is aging. Will today's younger members be financially able to support redevelopment [payments] in future?*
- *How will mortgage/borrowing payments increase when interest rates rise?*

During construction (2)

Two persons are concerned because they do not yet know enough to understand how, during the construction period, we will keep our current activities ‘up and running’, keep our current community healthy, and attract and keep members.

Affordable housing (7)

Seven persons expressed questions and concerns that they have not yet seen enough information about affordability.

A few are concerned because they have not yet seen enough consideration of coop housing; one noted their concern about the tension between social justice and economic imperatives (between social housing and financial return); and one person is concerned because they have not yet seen provision for day care to serve resident families in the apartment building.

Design elements (6)

The concerns about design elements are in response to the drawings the redevelopment team presented in their most recent forum, and most of the concerns are related to the apartment building and its landscaping:

- *proposed building will over-ride [over-shadow] church*
- *aesthetics of a 6-storey apartment building*
- *want to keep trees (along Oak St & 49th) [28 hornbeam trees]*
- *keep entrance from Oak St.*

One person has not yet seen provision for a “dedicated RE space” [for kids/youth - not shared with on-going daycare] and another “wants to see lots of green [environmental] elements”.

Commitment to follow project to successful completion (5)

Five of the people at the forum have not yet seen enough evidence to convince them that the UCV community has the commitment to follow this project to successful completion.

- *One is concerned because they have not seen a plan that can grab the “hearts and minds of the congregation”.*
- *One has not yet been convinced of the need for this project and suggested that there are other ways to raise money.*
- *One is concerned because they do not know who will be on the dedicated team during the construction period (current co-chairs Michael Clague and Gordon Gram will not continue full-on if this project goes fwd).*
- *Two people are concerned because they do not yet see evidence that the UCV community has the strength of volunteers to carry this out.*
- *One suggested it might be better to delay than make a possibly regrettable decision*

POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS

The last part of the forum invited people to share ideas about what we can do as a result of this forum. Ideas included:

- Share flipchart (FC) contents and a summary analysis of this meeting with the Board, the redevelopment team, and the congregation. (*We will do this.*)
- A full day or half day visioning and/or planning workshop (including financial viability analysis and other possible uses of the UCV site). Extend this conversation more broadly in the congregation by publicizing information about workshop topics and providing ways for those not at the workshop to respond and provide input. [*This is now planned for May 26.*]
- Organize another similar forum. [*This is now planned for May 26.*]
- Organize a forum on the current state of our campus buildings.
- Research and share other approaches to financing a co-op.

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