

COMPILATION OF FEEDBACK GIVEN AT THE PROPERTY VISION TEAM AUGUST GATHERINGS

Comments specific to Other Considerations & Concerns – Now and in the Future

All comments at the gatherings were recorded as part of this document, therefore you may see similar if not exact comments made by different members of UPC. One hundred members offered their comments. It was important to record all comments to show the importance felt on a particular topic. If you have questions or comments about this material, please email us at UPCpropertyvisionteam@gmail.com or contact Stephanie Morris at stephanietmorris@sbcglobal.net or 512-415-9797.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS – NOW AND IN THE FUTURE:

- Uplift bus pass raffles are a big draw, but CapMetro is allowing unhoused people to ride for free
- Need to keep in mind the potential effects of having the light rail on Guadalupe Street
- Where Micah 6, Uplift and other ministries will operate during a construction period?
- Should we consider moving our ministries to where people need them vs. having clients coming to us?
- Going ahead with a project makes a statement to the community but not doing something makes a statement also
- How to help the homeless now that the Salvation Army is closed downtown there is more of a need. Maybe contact Community First and see what needs are the greatest and how we can help. Could we offer a program to provide driver's education to become an 18 wheeler driver – programs that provide skills to work and get a job are best to prevent individuals from dropping back into homeless or addictive states.
- Russel Lowry Hart, who is to take over as president of ACC, has stated that students at community colleges are generally working 1-2 jobs and need help. He created a fund to help these students pay for larges expenses to reduce the dropout rate. The funds given to students are called "non-forgive loans". If a student graduates and gets a job, the loan is forgiven. Could UPC create a fund to help support students in need?
- Look at the work of 1st Presbyterian Church in Dallas, TX and see what kinds of ministries/services they have done
- Capital Idea is an organization helping those that are already working marginal jobs get degrees that they would not otherwise be able to afford to help improve their employment options and life status. Generally, these individuals are 30+ yrs old
- How mass transit will change the ability of disabled people to move around
- The Starbucks location at 24th Street/San Antonio Street *and* the Kappa Delta parking lot at the SW corner of this intersection will be developed into 30 story towers by LV Properties (who did the Moon Tower across from UPC's central courtyard)
- The Hillel (at San Antonio Street/21st Street) is considering development
- UPC needs to consider hiring onto staff an African-American – UPC cannot diversify if potential members cannot see people that look like them
- The south courtyard is so hot and nothing will grow there – we should rent it out to a food truck
- The pastor has to be the beacon of light and get behind these ideas for the congregation to get excited about this and "move" the congregants with energy – this will jump start the process
- We need a community with young people
- We need to understand our very urban setting as a destination church and the parking and traffic issues that exist for all members during the week
- Light rail will probably help with travel to church
- We have to consider the future of our property but we also need to figure out what we can do right now to make things work and improve things at our church
- We have a lot of extra space at our church. Are there therapist or UPC members with specialties that might want to offer their services and utilize some of this space during the week?
- There is an effort to get members to move forward in the pews during worship as to make the sanctuary look fuller on zoom

- CONT. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- It is a bit patronizing to expect people to come to us for Uplift and Micah 6. Maybe we should find a way to get to them. Go into the community.
- We used to have a van – that we could use to go to clients.
- Not all ministries need to be a program, it can be something simple to fill a need.
- Nixta – in East Austin put refrigerators outside and leftovers in it to share with people who needed them. It's not a program, but it is filling a need.
- We underuse our building. Need to get this back to pre-pandemic levels and beyond
- Loved the University musicians participating in our worship – it helped bring new people to us and a more diverse group but that isn't happening anymore. Need to pull others into our music program.
- What does our congregation have the most energy to support to do? We need to focus on that instead of what the few are interested in. We may have to disappoint some to create viable ministries. We need to prioritize our efforts.
- The building could be more useful to help out migrant workers and parents of young children.
- How do we become a stellar partner in our neighborhood and a model for Austin?
- What do we need to do to create magic in this location?
- We are good at our internal ministry but we need to go out into the community
- There aren't many opportunities to be in community at UPC that are not task oriented. We need more nurturing oriented opportunities.
- We need to ask – what do the ministries really want to accomplish?
- How do we engage with the University? What are their needs? Not just students, but how can we support the university and all it represents?
- We could hold an "international day" and use these individuals as a sort of focus group to ask what their needs are
- Concerts in the courtyard – all are welcome – the UT music school could participate
- We are too much of a Martha congregation of doers
- Time and Talent commitments – use for the stewardship campaign? If we have a vision for the church and programs we back, then there needs to be a concerted effort from the congregation to be hands on
- We need hubs that can be a center for West Campus – book club gatherings? Student study hall? Exercise class?
- Graduate students and staff are also part of the campus community and need help too – UT also has a big contingency of "nontraditional" students (part-time, transfers, parent who are students, etc.) that need help

CONCERNS – NOW AND IN THE FUTURE:

- Don't want to develop a mediocre space
- Churches have been torn apart by money and we don't want this to happen to UPC
- There is a lack of sidewalk space in the West Campus area
- West Campus is in a food desert. Guadalupe businesses struggle. All businesses run on a 12-month income cycle but students are only here for 10 months out of the year. This makes it difficult for businesses to work in the area. If housing was created for individuals that live here 12 months of the year and thus supported businesses 12 months of the year, this would help the community. Housing for senior citizens, UT staff & faculty, UT medical personnel, grad students could be ideas.
- Preserving our trees
- Don't feel our current sanctuary is inviting to the community
- How disabled people move or cannot move around our current facility
- Dealing with developers who want to maximize profit when UPC is an ecumenical institution
- Possibility of oversaturation of student housing in the West Campus area? Because of UPC location and proximity to UT, this possibility will be only a very slight risk if a risk at all. UPC can consider different kinds of housing.
- The need to grow our membership – the congregation is going to have to get involved, members have to do something

- CONT. CONCERNS

- When we create something new on our property we need to integrate UPC and the community (students) together on our property. Not a “them” space and an “us” space.
- Must be mindful of the liability, security, and cost of all things done in the church. Especially concerned about UPC’s insurance coverage for activities and the costs
- Safety and security of certain people coming into our building
- Traffic and construction gives members a reason to stay home and be on zoom and not come to church
- We won’t be able to do everything so what will we be able to give up in order to make this work? What are we attached to? – trees, organ
- The accessibility to mobility impaired individuals is very difficult in the sanctuary – there are no bathrooms that are easily accessible.
- Declining membership
- Every idea has a cost and a cost/benefit analysis needs to be done and we need to assess what volunteers are needed and can actually run the idea/program
- An RFI (Request For Information) needs to be done before a RFP (Request For Proposal)
- A young man (single parent) came into UPLift and asked what programs there were for him at UPC. The volunteer really didn’t have an answer for him as there are no young groups, parenting classes at UPC to engage in.
- UPC tends to take on grands ideas/opportunities and then we come up short
- We need programs that are sustainable and not just good ideas – how do we know what we want when it isn’t defined?
- Older members have trouble with accessibility issues.
- The sound system in the sanctuary is not good – can hear the pastor better on zoom than in person (although it was agreed if you are hooked up to the T-coils it is good).
- Traffic around the church is difficult
- Still in favor of selling our property and moving out to another location that is more inviting to young families
- Our building is a fortress to get in – lots of doors all locked
- Our building is not very welcoming – needs to be open 7 days a week – more than just Sunday morning
- Need a drop off area for mobility impaired and those bringing items to the church
- For those with mobility issues, the sanctuary isn’t easy – try getting to a bathroom
- What is attractive/not attractive about our facility? Love the tree, sanctuary, and its beautiful windows, but there are so many entrances and no way in – they are always locked. Students literally walk around the church. It is not very welcoming.
- What are the needs in our neighborhood? We need to survey them and address their needs. Could the architect students do a survey? – food desert, need for green spaces, places to walk dogs, etc.
- Too much student housing being built – will there be an oversaturation at some point? Yes, there may be too many beds for students at some point, but due to the location of UPC and its proximity to the university we will not experience a housing issue as some high-rises that are located several blocks west of UPC. Alternative housing options for seniors, families, young professionals, UT faculty/staff/visiting professors & grad students are possibilities.
- Trying to get to church is more and more difficult – how can we help combat traffic issues – ease to get to church?
- Do not want to end up with a church that is property rich and membership poor
- It doesn’t make sense that we have a \$1M endowment to spend on 7 students right now
- Regarding a congregational vote to continue exploring development of our entire property later this fall – don’t want this to be a difficult meeting
- Doing nothing and continuing to be an empty building
- Creating something that is unsustainable or purely money motivated
- That our congregation might fade away