



Bloor Street United Church

RFP Proposal Executive Summary

At its spring meeting on June 9, 2011, the congregation of Bloor Street United Church unanimously approved the following resolution:

The congregation of Bloor Street United Church enthusiastically directs its redevelopment committee to put forward the Bloor Street United Church site as the future location for the General Council Office. The congregation of Bloor Street United Church looks forward to warmly welcoming the General Council to join us at the corner of Bloor and Huron Streets in Toronto.

It is our hope that this proposal will be received with the same enthusiasm with which it is submitted.

Bloor Street United Church

A Community Exploring Faith, Seeking Justice and Living in Respect with Creation.

Located in the heart of Toronto, Bloor Street United Church has a long and proud history as one of the founding churches in our denomination. Over the years our ministers and members of our congregation have served as moderators, staff and volunteers in the ministry of the national church as well as other courts of the United Church.

Today we are a healthy congregation both spiritually and financially. Our efforts to be a welcoming community of faith have meant that membership is growing and our composition is diversifying. We are also blessed that many students and young professionals often make Bloor Street their church home, even if only on a short term basis. As a result, there is a continued good feeling and freshness to our worship. Congregational givings are complemented by a sound endowment fund which enables us to support a thriving ministry including outreach and social justice programmes. We are also strong supporters of the Mission and Service Fund. To learn more about Bloor Street we invite you to visit our web page at www.bloorstreetunited.org

Over the years, we have endeavoured to be good stewards of our building by sharing it with the Alpha Korean Congregation as well as approximately 300 different local community groups and members. However, as with many older churches, ours was designed with a focus on Sunday worship. At Bloor Street this means we have a sanctuary that can seat more than seven hundred and a rabbit warren of inaccessible meeting rooms, kitchens, offices, classrooms and



washrooms that waste too much energy to heat and light. Further, a count of all the members of the congregation and community who make use of the building during the week would easily exceed those who attend worship on Sunday. Our largest and best space is being used the least.

This new reality is not a bad thing. Peoples' need to engage with church and explore their faith has evolved and so too must we. It would be wrong to confuse a decline in Sunday worship attendance with a diminished yearning amongst people to consider the greater purposes in their lives. Our congregation and the wider United Church are faced with an excellent opportunity to provide a liberal progressive theological framework for faith exploration. In our case, and we are likely not alone, we are constrained by our existing space. We need to break open or demolish our walls, both literally and figuratively, and welcome people into our midst to experience the wonderful riches of ways that we in the United Church travel on our faith journeys and connect with God.

To this end we have embarked on a project of redevelopment. We recently issued a request for expressions of interest and included as one of our requirements space of the Office of the General Council. We received four compelling proposals from accomplished developers and have we met with each to elaborate on the details of their submissions. As our proposal indicates, were our site chosen in a timely manner the General Council would have the opportunity to collaborate in the design of its space to ensure its needs are met.

The redevelopment of a long standing United Church in the heart of Toronto, will send a strong message to the local residential, business and university communities about the continued relevance and vibrancy of our congregation. Placing our the national church's head office within this redevelopment, strengthens that message and provides a symbol that the United Church is continuing to evolve and growth while making brave and intelligent uses of its important assets.

Our Proposal

We believe our proposal meets the criteria identified in the Request for Proposals.

From a financial perspective, we are prepared to lease 40,000 square feet of space at annual average rate of \$ 30.00 per square foot per year including all operating cost plus both municipal taxes and HST. This offer compares with the current actual payment at the present location of \$ 40.50 per month or a saving of 26 %. We recognize that the United Church is able to recover some part of both the realty and HST paid but we feel our offer still represents a saving of



about 20 % over present actual costs. In addition our proposal is for 6,000 sq ft less than requested in the RFP or a saving of \$ 180,000 per year. We feel that this space saving can be achieved by utilizing space available during the weekdays within Bloor Street and while there would be some rental charges for specific use they would be much less than the cost of having dedicated space. Finally, while framed as a lease between landlord and tenant, it is important to note that the rent would be paid not to a commercial or institutional entity but to a congregation within the United Church who will use the money to further our shared ministry.

Our proposal also places the General Council offices in the heart of one of the world's most ethnically diverse cities. Toronto is the headquarters of the Canadian Council of Church, the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada, KAIROS and many of our other ecumenical partners. Our site has the particular advantage of being very close to the University of Toronto and Emmanuel College. A Toronto location also provides access to a deep pool of talented individuals from diverse backgrounds that can help propel the vision of the United Church as an intercultural church.

Given that an important part of the work of the General Council consists of hosting meetings of committees and task groups, our location is ideal as it is part of a vibrant and safe neighbourhood with plenty of restaurants, hotels, caterers and parking within the development. Perhaps just as important, there is subway stop servicing both subway lines right on our doorstep.

Three key criteria for our congregation is that the new development: (i) be environmental sound (e.g., a preference to "reuse" as much of the existing structure as possible and a minimum of a LEEDs silver designation for any new development), (ii) provide flexible space, and (iii) that such space will allow full participation by all members of our community regardless of any physical, visual or hearing impairment. In these respects, we feel the needs of General Council are aligned with ours. In addition, both Bloor Street and the General Council require the same types of space (offices, meeting rooms, kitchens) but generally, not always, at different times – the General Council during business hours, Bloor Street during evenings and weekends. Furthermore, the General Council would be able to make use of our sanctuary for its worship and large meeting needs. A partnership between us would minimize redundancy and underutilizing space, by making better and more flexible space available to the congregation, the national church, and community groups that Bloor Street already hosts.

Finally, it is important to note that joining us at the corner of Huron and Bloor streets would provide the General Council with visibility and proximity to the day to day ministry of a thriving, vibrant long standing United Church congregation. A partnership in the building will give fertile



ground for deeper and mutual understanding of the relationships and synergies between these two courts of the church.

Conclusion

In summary, we believe our proposal for including the General Council offices on the Bloor Street site:

1. Would provide strong visibility to the vibrancy and continued relevance of the United Church of Canada;
2. Places our church's national headquarters within a wonderful neighbourhood in the heart one of the world's most diverse cities;
3. Gives the General Council the opportunity to help design the new, flexible, accessible and environmental sound space it seeks;
4. Presents the opportunity for rich collaboration and deeper understanding between two courts of the church; and
5. Is very compelling from a financial perspective.

We truly look forward to welcoming the General Council and building our new sacred space together.