

Zumbro Lutheran Church Building Project Focus Groups Final Report Summary | January 2019

Methodology

Focus groups were conducted at Zumbro Lutheran Church with congregation members on the following dates:

- Jan. 6, 9:35 am (100 members)
- Jan. 9, 5:00 pm (9 members)
- Jan. 9, 7:00 pm (18 members)
- Jan. 10, 10:00 am (37 members)
- Jan. 13, 11:45 am (26 members)
- **TOTAL: 190 members attended focus groups**

Marne Gade facilitated each session, with members of the Building Leadership Team or church staff assisting as note takers for discussion at each of the smaller round tables (6-8 members/table).

As part of the discussion, members were asked to complete a feedback form for each building option discussed: Option #1 Essential Maintenance and Option #2: Enhancing Mission & Worship. Each feedback form had the following question along with space to add comments:

How committed would you be to financially supporting Option 1 (or Option 2)?

- Extremely committed
- Committed
- Neither committed nor uncommitted
- Uncommitted
- Extremely uncommitted

In order to extend an opportunity for feedback to beyond attending the focus groups, the feedback forms for Options #1 and #2 were available at the usher's stand starting Sunday, Jan. 13. A link to complete the feedback form was also made available on the church's website. Feedback from these two sources is also incorporated in the report. **A total of 18 additional feedback forms were submitted.**

In total, more than 200 members shared feedback by either attending a focus group or submitting a feedback form.

The focus groups sparked lively conversation with various groups at church. Feedback from ZWELCA circles was shared with Marne and is reflected in the report as well.

Focus Group Goals

1. Gather input about how the building can better support the mission of the congregation and contribute to the worship experience.
2. Assess the appeal of the current building and elements that would make it more welcoming and accessible to current and prospective members.
3. Assess how the congregation prioritizes various building options.
4. Assess the degree of enthusiasm toward contributing financially to elements within each building option.

Key Themes and Takeaways

A number of themes and key takeaways emerged from the focus groups:

Options #1: Essential Maintenance

- There is strong support for Option #1: Essential Maintenance.
- Members understand these items are needed to keep the building viable and vibrant.
- Several thought the all-level elevator in Option #2 should be moved to Option #1.
- However, many questioned the need/value of a wheelchair lift.
- There is strong support to add kitchen upgrades to Option #1.

Options #2: Enhancing Mission & Worship

- There is support for Option #2: Enhancing Mission & Worship, though the support is not as strong as for Option #1.
- Members had a multitude of questions about items in Option #2.
- The elevator and digital signage are important enhancements, but both need to be carefully considered to meet the needs of the congregation.
- Members shared a range of opinions and suggestions about the sanctuary enhancements. The hearing loop had the most support in this category of enhancements.

Improving accessibility

- Members of all ages emphasized the importance of improving accessibility for those with physical limitations, the elderly and families with toddlers and infants.
- Many suggestions were made about the existing elevator and the proposed new, all-level elevator.
- Members also shared their perspective and suboptimal experiences with the current ramp.
- The proposed wheelchair lift is not considered a viable option.

Enhancements throughout the building

- Several comments were made to consider the other levels of the building for maintenance and enhancements.
- The main kitchen appliances need significant repair or replacement.
- The sewing room has flooding issues.
- The Sunday School rooms are sterile/not welcoming for small group meetings.

Key stakeholders to involve

- Throughout the focus groups, members raised concerns about the kitchens and their important role in a multitude of mission-focused activities (Open Table, the Bazaar) and funerals.
- Several members suggested that ZWELCA be more involved in the building planning process.

Planning for the next generation

- The majority of focus group attendees were older members of the congregation. They made a strong point that any building enhancements should be made with the future generation in mind.
- As plans evolve, the Building Leadership Team should seek additional feedback from younger members.