

SFBC Facilities Task Force

Why Now

Who are the people of SFBC?

Seattle First Baptist Church was founded in December 1869, with construction of the facility at its current location at the corner of Harvard and Seneca in 1910. An integral part of our church's identity is exploration into what it means to follow the way of Jesus Christ. SFBC has historically been led to solidarity and accompaniment with indigenous peoples, Chinese immigrants, Japanese-Americans sent away to internment camps, African-Americans fighting for civil rights, and the LGBTQIA+ community, and striving for peace in the world. That history remains alive among us as we continue to write new stories of faith, justice, and peace.

We are a vibrant, intergenerational community. Demographically, we are a majority European-American congregation, with Black, Latinx, and East- and South-Asian- American people represented as well. As with most Protestant churches in the USA, our congregation skews older, but we do have young adults and families with young children who are active in the life of our community. We are no longer a neighborhood church, with just about 15% of our congregation living in the Capitol Hill and First Hill neighborhoods. Instead, we are a destination church, with members coming from as far as Everett, Tacoma, Redmond, and, in this era of virtual worship, across the USA.

Many times during its 153-year history, SFBC has found itself at a difficult crossroads where a period of discernment and measured decision making was required. SFBC again finds itself in one of those moments, where a convergence of a number of potentially difficult issues face our congregation. Moments in time like these are often described as a 'perfect storm'.

Why now:

A "perfect storm" is a rare convergence of factors that, if properly leveraged, can be the nidus for incredible positive change. Seattle First Baptist Church is currently experiencing a perfect storm:

- city zoning requirements will be driving costly seismic retrofits to the sanctuary that must be addressed in the near term — is it socially acceptable to continue to meet in a facility that does not address safety for its users?
- the SFBC facilities in general do not meet standards for accessibility for entrance into the building, egress from the building particularly in emergencies, as well as access to all parts of the facility (e.g. choir loft, balconies, office spaces, educational spaces) -this is not only a regulatory issue but a social justice issue which needs correcting

- the facilities infrastructure is aged and in need of modernization, our building is 110 years old with ever increasing maintenance costs — heating and ventilation that needs to be efficient and easily regulated for the varying use cases, electrical system is decades behind current needs, insulation is non-existent in many areas of the facility, causing heat loss; our congregation is growing older, membership is declining, and far fewer of our current attendees are from neighborhood communities -- what can we do with our facility to make the church more inviting to the community and particularly a younger audience?
- the long range strategic planning efforts have identified a set of focused “key ministries” which could be better served and advanced with renovations and facilities upgrades that better fit the needs of these ministries – i.e. function driving facilities.

What has the SFBC Facilities Task Force been commissioned to do:

Facilities Task Force Goals

- inventory the state of and effectiveness of the current SFBC
- facilities/resources
- inventory the projected need of the SFBC Key Ministries for the next decade in regards to facilities and resources
- outline and present to the SFBC Community opportunities at enhancing the role of SFBC in the neighborhood and city through its facilities/resources

Facilities Task Force Objectives

Identify specific benefits, opportunities, and costs of potential facilities upgrades, and remodels, retrofits and redevelopment proposals. Preliminary options being considered:

- minor renovations, keep the facility basically unchanged
- major renovations and retrofits (i.e. seismic) to current building
- raze and re-develop the admin/education buildings, keep sanctuary untouched except for seismic upgrades
- raze all three buildings and re-develop the land
- sell and move locations, build a new facility
- enhance implementation of the long range plans, through improved facilities resources, for each of the SFBC key ministries adopted by the Executive Committee and Diaconate
- enhance the current facilities such that the building ‘broadcasts’, in its architecture, art, and function the values, social justice concerns and key SFBC ministries to the neighborhood and greater community

Examples:

- welcoming church — how does our church façade say ‘welcoming’ without regard to religion — how do we move beyond an Euro-centric/Judeo-Christian architectural/art emphasis

- anti-racist church — what does this look like
- ancestral heritage of land — honoring the Duwamish tribe
- the facility values the presence of congregational and community members with disabilities and must be accessible
- accessible to all genders
- conventional and contemplative worship greenspace/environmental sustainability

How we are to do it:

The work of the Facilities Task force will be grounded in our Baptist heritage and the history of SFBC as well as being directed by the values adopted by SFBC and outlined below. We strive for a world where people are welcomed regardless of, and with respect for, their religious beliefs; where the separation of church and state is vigorously defended; where freedom is a fundamental right that values the dignity of all persons without regard to their race, country of birth, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, religion, or disabilities; and where compassion is the measure of our actions.

The SFBC Affirmation of Values statement (2017) reads:

1. **We will go deeper in faith** as we do justice, love mercy, work for peace and walk humbly with God.
2. **We will be present** to one another and our neighbors in our personal relationships and by creating venues for engagement where we can learn about viewpoints different from our own.
3. **We will respect all religions** by learning about the beliefs, values and struggles of our neighbors and by demonstrating support for them.
4. **We will welcome the stranger**, including immigrants and refugees, as our Scriptures instruct. We will explore how to support their causes and advocate for justice, remembering that many of us are the children of immigrants and refugees.
5. **We will actively work to recognize and change our own biases** and to fight racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, ageism and other systemic prejudices.
6. **We will protect our environment** and support preservation programs that are based on scientific data designed to improve our resources, enhance biodiversity, and reverse human-caused climate change.

Our Ask

The SFBC Facilities Task Force is looking to develop strategic partners with community and corporate groups who bring climate-aware and social justice architectural experience to the Facilities Task Force while we continue to explore opportunities that this moment of transition affords SFBC. We are specifically looking to work with organizations and companies with Black, Indigenous and People of Color leadership.

The task force would love to explore and understand the architectural and engineering implications of facilities retrofits, remodeling, redevelopment opportunities available to SFBC.

Areas of Interest:

Social Justice

- Anti-Racism
- Access for elderly and needing enhanced mobility
- Members and visitors with hearing and vision limitations
- Minority communities
- Marginalized communities
- Enhancing worship opportunities
- Re-visioning the sanctuary interior design for Weekly worship

Meditative worship

Small group worship

Ecumenical and interfaith worship

- On-line worship

Community engagement and partnering

- Collaboration with other Baptist congregations and organizations Church Council of Greater Seattle
- Evergreen Association
- Bet Alef Meditative Synagogue Muslim Association of Puget Sound SU and Ignatian Spirituality Center Faith Action Network
- Interfaith Community Sanctuary
- Community musical groups of various ages and genres
- Non-profit organizations
- Capitol Hill and First Hill neighborhood
- Professional concerts and 'town halls'
- Environmental and climate sensitive engineering
- Prioritizing working with BIPOC-owned and -operated contractors and businesses

Land and facilities assessment values

- Green Space Design (i.e. garden, park, etc.)

Administrative Needs

- Co-pastoring leadership model
- Support of Lay leadership