

Have you considered how important starting off on the right trajectory really is?

By Rodney C. James

Consider this: if you were off course by just one degree flying from the west coast the east coast, you would miss your destination by more than 40 miles. One degree off course from Earth to the moon would land you more than 4,100 miles away from the moon.

The same can be true when considering a renovation, expansion or new facility.

The right first step in any journey is a critical step to ensure you begin on the right course, with the right information, and with the right support in place to ensure a successful arrival at your destination.

Every project begins with vision and need. Sometimes the vision is the compelling factor; other times, need drives the urgency to move a project forward. Regardless, either is a solid reason to begin to consider your next project — and ministry should be the focus. The “why” of the project, not the “what.” As you begin to vision, dream and plan, it is imperative that the impact on ministry, people, and lives should be the driving force.

Where do we begin?

The right first step is to select the right partner. You’ll notice I didn’t say the right architect, the right builder or the right construction company. For that, you need a partner. Most pastors and churches are not equipped to manage every aspect of a construction project. There is the design, the budgeting, the capital campaign, potentially a loan, city or state requirements, current facility code challenges, land or property issues, possible environmental impact costs, traffic considerations, utility sizing and access, and much more. If you do not have a partner who is willing to walk this entire journey with you to help you uncover all the potential obstacles or hurdles, you may have a costly surprise awaiting you down the road. Often that surprise is discovered far too late and after much expense if your journey did not begin on the right course. Selecting the right partner means finding a firm who understands ministry, who is willing to walk the long journey and who you feel you can trust. You need a partner who has resources to connect you to others who can help you, and who is more interested in helping you build the Kingdom than helping you build a building.

Once you have secured the right partner, the next step is a good due diligence process that uncovers all those potential obstacles and hurdles that may impact your project. Every hurdle has costs associated with it and by taking the time to fully complete a due diligence process, you can know every potential cost that will be required before you start designing your



project. It only makes sense to count the cost of all project requirements before you start design. Far too often, when these items are not uncovered and properly budgeted for, the project can be in jeopardy of moving forward when they do surface. Nothing has more negative impact on leadership equity or can be more frustrating than a large unaccounted-for expense after you have completed design or even worse, began construction. This all-too-common problem can be avoided if the proper due diligence is fully completed *before* design.

Once the due diligence is completed and all associated costs are identified, it’s time to begin the visioning, programming and concept design process. This is the step that most church administrators want to jump to without consideration of steps one and two. Everyone wants to see what the new building will look like and how the new floor plan will lay out, but if this step is out of order, a potential future issue could derail your progress. This visioning, programming and concept design process that is ministry-focused provides the best next step in your path to seeing your vision become a reality.

At Master’s Plan Church Design and Construction, our heart is to be a partner with ministries that desire to take the right steps in the right order. We look at your project through the eyes of an architect, but with the heart and vision of a pastor to ensure that you land at your destination exactly where you planned to arrive!

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