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How Much Land Do We Need?

Any church building on a new site or expanding on the present property must make a determination initially about the amount of land needed for the proposed development. Any offer to purchase land should include a contingency period for completion of a feasibility study as a condition prior to closing on the purchase. Because of all the variables involved, putting a conceptual site design on paper is the only good way to be sure that the project will fit. It is then a good idea to take the concept to the local planning department for review to insure that the proposed development meets all local codes and zoning requirements.

When locating to a new site, the church should first determine the amount of “buildable” land by excluding building setbacks, easements, and unsuitable topography. The amount of remaining land then can be divided into areas for the building footprint, landscaping around the building, paving, site landscaping, recreation areas, and land for future development. The building footprint will be the ground-level building size. Add about 60% to the footprint for landscaping and walks around the building. Figure about 100-120 s.f. of paving and landscaped islands for every seat in the sanctuary if all parking must be on-site. Deduct 350 s.f. of paving for every parking space allowed on the street. It would be wise to buy or option additional land for future expansion based upon a master plan for church growth.

Jeff Thomas is Vice President of Omega Church Consultants, Inc., Church Designers and Builders, located in Indianapolis. You may contact him at jeff@omegachurchdesign.com or (317) 359-6248 or visit the Omega website at <http://www.omegachurchdesign.com>.

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