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## Selecting Your Church Site

There are a good number of criteria to analyze when looking at a piece of land for your church site. What appears to be a “great deal” may actually not be a good value when development costs and site limitations are fully considered. Don’t simply rely on the opinion of the selling agent, or on rules of thumb such as one acre per 100 seats, when evaluating the land. Land development professionals such as architects, appraisers, surveyors, civil engineers, building contractors, building inspectors and others, can give valuable information to the church to help it determine the true value of the property. Factors affecting the value include zoning, amount of usable land, utilities, topography, soil conditions, shape of the land, location, access, environmental factors, permitting costs, and more.

When we speak of usable land, we are referring to the land that you can actually build on. This is determined by subtracting all the building setbacks, easements, and restrictions from the site and by evaluating the shape and topography of the land. The costs of bringing utilities to the site, or leveling the site for buildings and parking areas, can be a “budget-buster” for some churches. The land purchase should include a contingency clause allowing you a period of time to investigate these factors before closing.

Keep in mind that the cost of the land may seem “cheap” but the cost per acre could soar when the church accounts for the limited amount of usable land and the high development costs for the property.

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