

GRACE COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
CAMPUS VISION
The Long Range Vision Team
April 2025



In 2019, the Long Range Visioning Team formed at Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church to begin a process of discernment around (a) what it means to be church, and (b) how we can use our resources to carry out the mission of our church in an authentic and meaningful way. In particular, we have focused on re-visioning how our land and our buildings contribute to our mission of theological curiosity, moral courage, abundant compassion and beloved community.

We are excited to be already living into an expanded vision of our campus that imagines a mixed-use campus that integrates **housing, education, healing and community** to provide a hub of repair, connection, and resiliency for the people of Asheville and Western North Carolina.



The experience of COVID-19 broadened our congregation's awareness to recognize our church community spans across the country and is not limited to physical location. We began conversations around how our physical spaces could be transformed simply from a place for our congregation to worship to a space for the community, including our congregation, to work to heal the wounds of systemic racism, generational trauma, and economic injustice.

The experience of Hurricane Helene in the fall of 2024 has continued this transformational process of our physical church grounds as well as the spirit of the church. We converted our sanctuary to an emergency relief center and raised over \$5 million in rent support funding to provide thousands of families impacted by the hurricane the ability to stay in their homes.

Togiyasdi is the name the Cherokee gave to the confluence of the French Broad and Swannanoa rivers in what is now Asheville. Our sanctuary sits on just under five acres of land located on Merrimon Avenue in north Asheville. This land was an ancient trade and travel route for the Cherokee. Over the last three centuries, this land was taken from our indigenous brothers and sisters, used by slave-owning landholders for wealth and power accumulation, and redlined to exclude people of color from the state-sponsored benefits of homeownership.

As the inheritors of this legacy, we invite our congregation to reimagine how this land and our faithful work can become a means of repair and healing for our community and the world.

Vision

The Long Range Visioning Team imagines using the land we have inherited to support and minister to our community by providing and creating:

- ***Housing*** and ***housing services*** to those who are in the most need
- Spaces for our partners to provide ***education*** to enrich our community
- Spaces for ***community gatherings and worship*** that are welcoming to people of all backgrounds where we work to undo the legacy of white supremacy and heal the wounds of the past
- ***Community*** spaces where our congregation, our community, and organizations working for social justice and change can collaborate and build relationship

Housing

As a Matthew 25 congregation, GCPC believes that building congregational vitality and eradicating systemic poverty requires all people to have access to safe housing. Our land sits on a major thoroughfare in Asheville along a bus line, which would make housing options at GCPC accessible for residents and providers.

Here are some of the housing possibilities that we are exploring:

- Deeply Affordable Housing for our most vulnerable unhoused neighbors, which explore components of:
 - Building Equity- Residents build wealth over time through the accumulation of equity-like benefits as a part of this housing model. We are reimagining what “affordable” means.
- Emergency / Safe Shelter to provide short term housing to those suffering from being unhoused during extreme weather, natural disasters or other emergency situations.
- Rent Support Services to provide support to those at risk for eviction and becoming unhoused. True rent subsidies are rare in the US, as opposed to incentives for homeownership. There is a profound need for a true safety net when emergencies



occur for individuals and communities. This model of rent support is unique and would be a key component of our project.

- Wrap-Around Support Service Spaces to provide spaces for social workers, mental health providers, job placement services, and others to meet the needs of temporary and permanent residents.

Education

Through our partnership with YTL (Youth Transformed for Life, www.ytltrainingprograms.org), we envision a part of the campus dedicated to youth education, providing opportunities to address educational disparities rooted in current educational structures and practices. Our campus already provides space for YTL's afterschool and summer camp programming. The expansion and renovation of our education wing could allow for a greater breadth of services and opportunities for YTL programming.

This could mean expanding and/or incorporating some or all of the uses below into the campus:

- After School and Summer School Programming, providing low/no-cost educational opportunities for children and childcare support for families
- Primary School to provide critical early-age (K-3rd grade) education opportunities for populations harmed by systemic oppression
- Multipurpose Spaces that can be used for both educational and congregational activities, supporting multiple stakeholders and providing opportunities for community-building and engagement.

Programs and Community Gatherings

GCPC is a community focused on healing and culture building. We are working to build deep community in a broad sense through integrating our church spaces with community spaces, bringing our congregation and our community partners into closer relationship with each other.



- Multipurpose Sanctuary Spaces - Integrated uses between congregational gatherings and spaces needs for community engagement and education
- Staff Offices and Meeting Spaces - Re-thinking offices and meeting spaces to support the needs of both the church staff and administration as well as community offices and meeting room needs.

Community

Our ministry is our community. Our calling as a Matthew 25 congregation leads us into a greater community with our neighbors, those in our community suffering from the effects of poverty and racism, and those on healing journey. Our vision for our campus supports our mission and our values by integrating our community partners in the use of the church campus.

- Community Spaces - Building spaces that can be used for meetings, events, and gatherings for both congregation and community members.
- Co-Working Spaces - Creating office spaces for organizations run by and serving those from underserved backgrounds throughout our city.
- Community Garden - Our large community garden is already the most visible part of our campus. We are envisioning integrating the community garden into our kitchen as a means of delivering local, healthy food to our partners and the broader community.
- Resilience Hub - Our church building already has solar panels installed to help support the energy needs of our campus. We are evaluating opportunities for our campus to serve as a resilience hub in times of crisis by providing power, water, internet connectivity, and safe shelter.



Partnerships

GCPC's community partnerships center the work of building relationship, moving at the speed of trust, and solidarity in the work of mutual liberation and transformation. These partnerships will continue to grow and deepen as we move into long term recovery work together.

Some of GCPC's partners are: Operation Gateway, Youth Transformed for Life (YTL), Faith 4 Justice, Just Recovery, the Buncombe County Long Term Recovery Group, United Way, Tzedek Social Justice Fund, Pisgah Legal Services, Western North Carolina Medical Society, Beloved Asheville, Cenzontle Language Justice Cooperative, UMOJA, Reparations Stakeholders Authority of Asheville (RSAA), Racial Justice Coalition (RJC), La Milpa Collectiva, CIMA (Compañeros Inmigrantes de las Montañas en Acción), JMPRO Community Media, Pisgah Legal Services, Asheville City Schools, Just Economics, The ARC of North Carolina, Disability Partners of Asheville, The Light House, Oxford House, Haywood Street, The Red Cross, Equal Plates, World Central Kitchen, Just Funding, the Peace Team, ABCCM, Asheville Housing Authority, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, Mennonite Disaster Assistance and more.