

## 252 Atlantic Street

### Activity Report for the Period Ending May 31, 2023

***When will it be done and how much will it cost?*** Project timing and anticipated costs are two of the most frequently asked questions regarding the Stamford initiative. The first question reflects the high level of enthusiasm focused on launching worship services and serving the Stamford community. The second question reflects a concern about costs and a desire to lock in a budget number. For all of the reasons reported in prior status reports, these remain difficult questions to answer. This report describes the status of our construction efforts, the challenges that we face and our plans for moving forward.

#### **Structural Issues**

Prior to closing on the building in July 2022, the church team had the building inspected by a team of professionals including a commercial building inspector, an environmental team, and a structural engineer. This analysis resulted in the identification of several issues (e.g., presence of asbestos, abandoned equipment, etc.) that led to negotiation of a significant reduction (approximately 11%) in the purchase price of the building. However, that assessment did not reveal any structural issues as the steel infrastructure was fully encased within the exterior masonry walls. An extensive level of demolition would have been required to expose the steel beams, so this task could not be performed until after we closed on the property.

Immediately following closing on the building, we initiated interior demolition. Progress was slowed by the need to perform asbestos abatement tasks in conjunction with the demolition. Following abatement, demolition efforts began with the removal of existing interior walls, floors, and ceilings. These tasks were completed in December 2022.

The construction team then began a more focused evaluation of the overall structural integrity of the building by exposing the perimeter steel beams and columns encased in the masonry walls throughout the building. Figures 1 and 2 on the following page illustrate the work effort. We simultaneously solicited proposals from steel contractors to remediate the problems identified. However, these efforts proved premature as a more extensive investigation led to the identification of additional problems.

Once we were able to open the exterior walls, we learned that while the structural steel was painted prior to installation, no other flashing, waterproofing, or moisture protection was provided. As a result, the ends of the steel roof bar joists are severely rusted. The steel beam flange plates that extend from the top or bottom of the perimeter steel beams to support the parapet walls and the top portion of the masonry walls are also severely rusted.



**Figure 1 – Exterior Wall Demolition**



**Figure 2 – Interior Wall Demolition**

Once the steel infrastructure was fully exposed, our structural engineer determined that the perimeter walls are not adequately gravity load bearing. While this structural design was fully code compliant in 1949 when the building was built, it is not compliant with today's building code with which we must comply. As a result, shear walls in the building's interior may be required to reinforce the perimeter walls and provide lateral stability for the building. This option will be assessed in conjunction with our evaluation of proposals from steel vendors to address the rust/deterioration problems described above.

All these structural issues must be addressed in our building renovation efforts, and have already adversely impacted project timing and construction cost estimates. Our Construction Manager and Owner's Representative have been evaluating alternative courses of action to address these structural issues and their impact on the project timeline and budget. The options range from repairing the existing steel infrastructure to partially or fully replacing it. This assessment has been ongoing and is expected to take another 4 to 8 weeks to complete.

## **Construction Activities**

In March we reported that construction activities had begun to address some of the architectural design features to be incorporated into the new space. However, we have temporarily suspended these construction efforts until we have a full plan for addressing the structural challenges outlined above.

## **Estimated Project Costs and Timing**

In the December 2022 status report, we reported that estimated construction costs for the full buildout of the building would be \$11.1 million. That preliminary estimate was developed by our Construction Manager with the goal of executing a Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) contract after construction drawings were completed. However, because of the structural issues and expanded demolition requirements described in the preceding paragraphs, as well as rising costs due to inflation, the GMP is expected to increase. Our construction manager is soliciting bids from multiple vendors to address these tasks and is committed to presenting us with a revised GMP proposal in early August.

The timing for completing building construction and launching worship services will not be known until our construction manager has evaluated all vendor proposals (for structural remediation) and developed a GMP. We remain committed to an Easter 2024 opening, but we will likely have to reevaluate that date in conjunction with the revised GMP described above.

## **Construction Spending – Project-to-Date**

Through the end of May, we have spent approximately \$2 million on the building project. All of these costs were included in the budget outlined in December 2022 and were necessary to get us to this stage. Categories of expenses include:

- Architect
- Structural Engineer
- MEP Services (mechanical, electrical and plumbing)
- Demolition
- Insurance (through the end of calendar year 2023)
- Pre-Construction Fees
- Owners Representative Services
- Electrical
- Other Construction Services

So far, all these charges have been “within budget” (as outlined in December 2022) as we have not yet incurred any additional project expenses to address the problems outlined in this report. We expect the budget to increase to address the problems outlined in this report, so we are actively researching ways to reduce costs and value-engineer the design. The revised budget will be shared with the congregation as soon as it is developed.

As we face construction challenges and cost increases, people may question the motives or performance of the vendors on the project team. To be clear, we are well pleased with the performance and guidance being provided by our construction team. They have been aggressive in their efforts to keep the project on schedule and proactive in identifying issues and alternative solutions.

### **Fund Raising and Vision-Casting**

Many congregants are anxious to see our new building and learn more about our plans to “*Make Christ Known*” in Stamford. In response, we are organizing a series of Vision Dinners and Site Tours. Participants will be able to tour the building, bless it by writing their favorite scripture on the walls, engage in Q&A with our construction team and church leadership and learn more about how they can support the building initiative through the gift of their time, talent, and treasure. The first two of these events are scheduled in June with more to follow. We need everyone’s prayerful engagement and financial support to successfully achieve our vision for serving the Stamford community.

### **Summary**

Over a decade ago, God called on Stanwich Church to bring the light of the Gospel to Stamford and serve the community there in the love of Christ. Our pastors, Elders and congregation have all embraced and reaffirmed this calling as we searched for a church home in Stamford. And after years of prayer and multiple course corrections, He led us to 252 Atlantic Street. The generosity of our congregation, the endless list of volunteers supporting this initiative, and the early response from the Stamford community have all reaffirmed this vision and calling on our time, talents and treasure. The current challenges are not insurmountable, but they do require the prayer and financial support of the congregation. We ask everyone to:

- Prayerfully consider how God is leading you to be a part of this initiative.
- Reach out to church leadership or one of the Elders if you have questions or desire additional information.
- Share your discernment with the Pastors and Elders; and
- Prayerfully consider how you can financially support this initiative.

**For every house is built by someone,  
but the builder of all things is God.**

**(Hebrews 3:4)**

**Let us not grow weary in doing good,  
for in due season we will reap, if we do  
not give up.**

**(Galatians 6:9)**