

COULD WE COMBINE HOUSING WITH PARKING AT HOLY SPIRIT?

Tell us about the idea of building housing on our parking lot

Earlier this year, a small group of parishioners asked the Vestry to approve exploring an idea to combine low-income housing with parking for parishioners on Holy Spirit's parking lot. The Vestry said, "Okay, go explore." But that's as far as we are.

The loose initial concept is: 2-3 floors of 20 to 24 apartments over ground level parking with a small office space to achieve mixed-use zoning status.

Right now, we're hoping the congregation will want to learn about what's possible and support further work to investigate a parking/housing combo for our parking lot.

What about parking for parishioners?

Adequate parking for Holy Spirit is a "must-have." Parking for our church could be part of a package that also includes some important housing resources for our community, which is suffering from the lack of affordable housing. One idea is housing for low-income seniors, which could even serve some individuals at Holy Spirit. This potential project is about serving our community and serving our parish. It needs to be a win-win.

How would this work financially?

We don't envision any long-term debt for Holy Spirit, as our parking lot is our stake in the project. We'd need to secure a combination of:

- Tax credits and subsidies
- Foundation funds and grants
- Possible long-term bond funding with a third-party community housing development organization taking the lead.

Depending on funding sources, there is potential to develop an income stream from the project for Holy Spirit.

What are the next steps and how long is the process?

Putting together a project like this will be challenging and will take time. Next steps include finding out the value of the parking lot, seeking out an affordable housing development partner, talking with architects and city planners, and most critical, seeking out federal, state and foundation funds and assessing other external financial resources. This is likely to be an effort that takes many months and even years to crystallize. It's not clear whether all the pieces could come together. That's what we'd be trying to find out.

This seems like a lot of work for 20 or 24 apartments. Why do this at all?

Rethinking our parking lot as both parking and housing would be an opportunity for Holy Spirit to live out more of our mission as God's people here in our city, where so many struggle to find affordable places to live. Over the life of this building, it could provide affordable housing for hundreds of people.

Combining parking with housing would be an expression of our baptismal covenant and our Holy Spirit mission, which starts with: "We follow the example of Jesus as we serve those in need."

Done thoughtfully, this project could help us connect better with our neighbors and our community. These efforts could be a small part of the wide range of housing solutions our city needs to continue to be a place for everyone.

Taking on projects that benefit the community is nothing new for our church – there are lots of examples of how people from Holy Spirit have made a difference in Missoula, from housing and healthcare to the environment, state government and culture and the arts.

Would the church manage these apartments day to day?

We believe we would seek out professional management for the building, once it was ready for occupancy.

Who is working on this?

The expanded committee consists of Molly Bowler, Lance Collister, John Crowley, Dick Dailey, Jesse Jaeger, Dave Strohmaier, David Tyrell, Nancy Tyrell and Clem Work. Not everyone is on board with the concept, but all are willing to put in some work to find out what the possibilities are.