

A stewardship-driven approach

BGW
ARCHITECTS

to the design & construction of ministry facilities

By Don Mahoney

There are many architectural firms that can provide creative design solutions, but creative design alone can be problematic for ministry-based organizations if it is simply an exercise to show fantastic possibilities that have little chance of getting funded.

Reducing the cost of construction must begin at the earliest stages with a design strategy that is focused on delivering innovative concepts that work within the parameters of a ministry's budget — and can actually get built.



Prior to launching into the design of a new building project, it is crucial that ministries take the time to truly count the costs and develop a clear picture of their current position as it relates to financial preparedness and current borrowing capacity. BGW's pre-design due diligence process includes an independent analysis of the church's financial statements for the previous three years, as well as a review of their giving history and overall ability to service new debt. This offers the owner, architect and contractor a solid foundation for good stewardship as they launch into design solutions for the new facility.

Another item that is key for ministries to address early on in the process is architectural fees. Many architects charge fees based on a percentage of the overall cost of construction. In our experience, percentage-based fees often provide incentive to expand the scope of the project and can lead to overpriced plans that do not fit within the ministry budget. By fixing the architectural fees, the architect is inspired to make decisions from the start that can reduce the cost of construction.

Collaboration is key

A big key to successfully casting your vision for a new facility or renovation project is in allowing for the highest level of collaboration and input early on from key ministry leaders. The BGW preliminary design process begins with a unique spin on an age-old architectural exercise

called a “charrette.” BGW has completed more than 900 ministry projects using this highly collaborative method, which takes place over a three-day period at the church or school site. Unlike the typical design process in which the architect works separately with little “back-and-forth” input from the owner, the charrette allows design solutions to evolve quickly with immediate feedback and real-time adaptations by the architect. We have found that this kind of collaboration builds unity and momentum quickly. Matters that are not entirely clear going into the charrette have a way of becoming more focused as vision and ideas are discussed between all representatives.

Every ministry has a unique DNA, and it would be a mistake to assume there is a one-size-fits all design solution for every church. That is why the first day of the charrette is spent listening and asking questions, to better understand the precious vision the Lord has given you. We then take all of what we have learned and combine that with our experience to translate your vision into an architectural design. We spend the next two days critiquing, changing and updating what we have come up with so that the intangible becomes tangible.

The visual tools that are created — including floor plans, site plans, elevations and exterior renderings — can help cast your ministry vision in a powerful way. Some ministries choose to take their preliminary design to the next level with 3D interior renderings and “fly-through” animation that can help generate additional excitement as you launch your fundraising campaign.

We believe that the involvement of the general contractor is also critical during the earliest stages of preliminary design, to help keep projects grounded from a cost perspective as we launch ideas and explore solutions. Even the best designers can often go down the road of cost-overrun with little difficulty as ideas and forms begin to emerge in the early stages of design. Builders can play the role of reason in an environment that often times requires balance of approach.

Following the charrette, BGW Architects and the partner general contractor work closely together to develop a preliminary cost estimate, taking into account all potential site costs, fees and other soft costs that could be involved to provide the ministry with a realistic financial forecast for the project.

Fixing a broken process

The world's way of designing and constructing buildings is in many ways a broken process, with a majority of commercial projects finishing over budget or late and job site conflict becoming the norm. Through a **unique approach** developed exclusively for ministry-based organizations, BGW Architects seeks to revolutionize the process and significantly reduce both upfront building costs and long-term maintenance and operation expenses.

To learn more about BGW's distinctive delivery model, pre-construction process, factory-direct building supplies and furnishings, and job-site ministry outreach program, visit our website at www.bgwservices.com. **CE**

Don Mahoney is Principal Architect & President at **BGW Architects** in Ogden, Utah. Having earned numerous awards in his 38-year career, Mahoney specializes in helping ministries to cast their vision during the very earliest stages through creative master planning and preliminary design concepts. He earned his master's degree in Architecture from the University of Utah in 1982 and formerly served as President of the American Institute of Architects for the State of Utah.