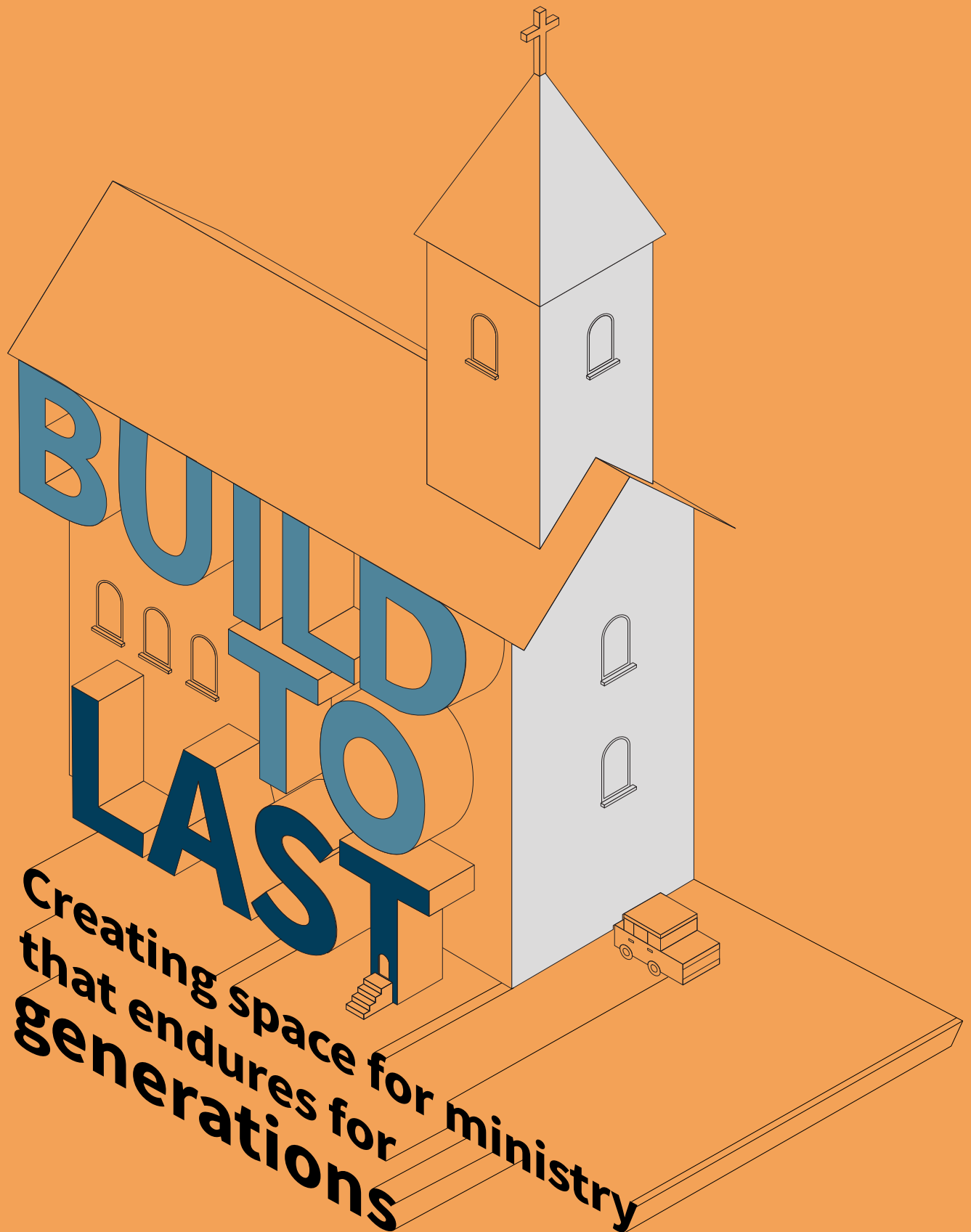




Stanton
Dahl
Architects



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THIS RESOURCE IS FOR church leaders, ministry teams, and decision-makers who want to think wisely about how their property can support gospel ministry. Whether you're just starting to consider future building needs or already have land and momentum, this booklet will help you plan with clarity, purpose, and stewardship.

YOUR HEART FOR MINISTRY

We know you're busy in ministry, preaching and discipling, caring for people, and growing God's kingdom. Buildings are not what you trained for, and they can feel overwhelming, distracting, and time-consuming. But they are essential for healthy gospel growth. Without well-planned spaces, it becomes harder to welcome new believers, disciple maturing Christians, and create a home for long-term ministry.

Your heart is for ministry, so is ours. That's why we want to give you a clear roadmap to see how ministry and buildings go hand in hand for lasting impact. This isn't just about bricks and mortar. It's about building a space where generations will come to faith, grow in Christ, and be sent out for gospel mission. A building that serves ministry well today, tomorrow, and for decades to come.

OUR HEART FOR MINISTRY

A quick hello from the two of us - Andrew Robson and Shayne Evans. We've both been deeply involved in church ministry and have years of experience walking alongside churches as they navigate building projects. We've seen almost every mistake in the book - projects that stall, spaces that don't work, and churches that regret decisions because they didn't have the right guidance.

This booklet is here to help. We want to be your guides, equipping you with wisdom and practical steps to avoid common pitfalls - keeping the main thing the main thing, and ensuring your building supports the gospel and ongoing fruitful ministry. More than just a construction project, this is about faithfully stewarding God's resources to enable generations of kingdom impact.





ANDREW ROBSON
Senior Consultant at Reach Australia

Andrew is based in Sydney and oversees Reach Australia's Leadership Development Program. Andrew worked for 29 years in larger churches, 18 of them as Executive Pastor or General Manager, including St Paul's Anglican Church Carlingford and EV Church.

He has extensive experience in organising churches for health and growth, and has managed several large church construction projects including fundraising. Andrew previously worked in strategy in commercial roles.

He attends St Paul's Anglican Church Carlingford.



SHAYNE EVANS
CEO and Lead Architect at Stanton Dahl Architects

Shayne is based in Sydney after having lived in many regional towns across Australia whilst growing up as a 'Pastor's kid'.

With a deep commitment to serving churches and communities, he has led projects across education, aged care, community and faith-based sectors, including many award-winning design projects that have been nationally recognised.

Shayne is passionate about people-first architecture and believes that well-designed space should serve kingdom purpose.

He attends Parramatta Baptist Church.

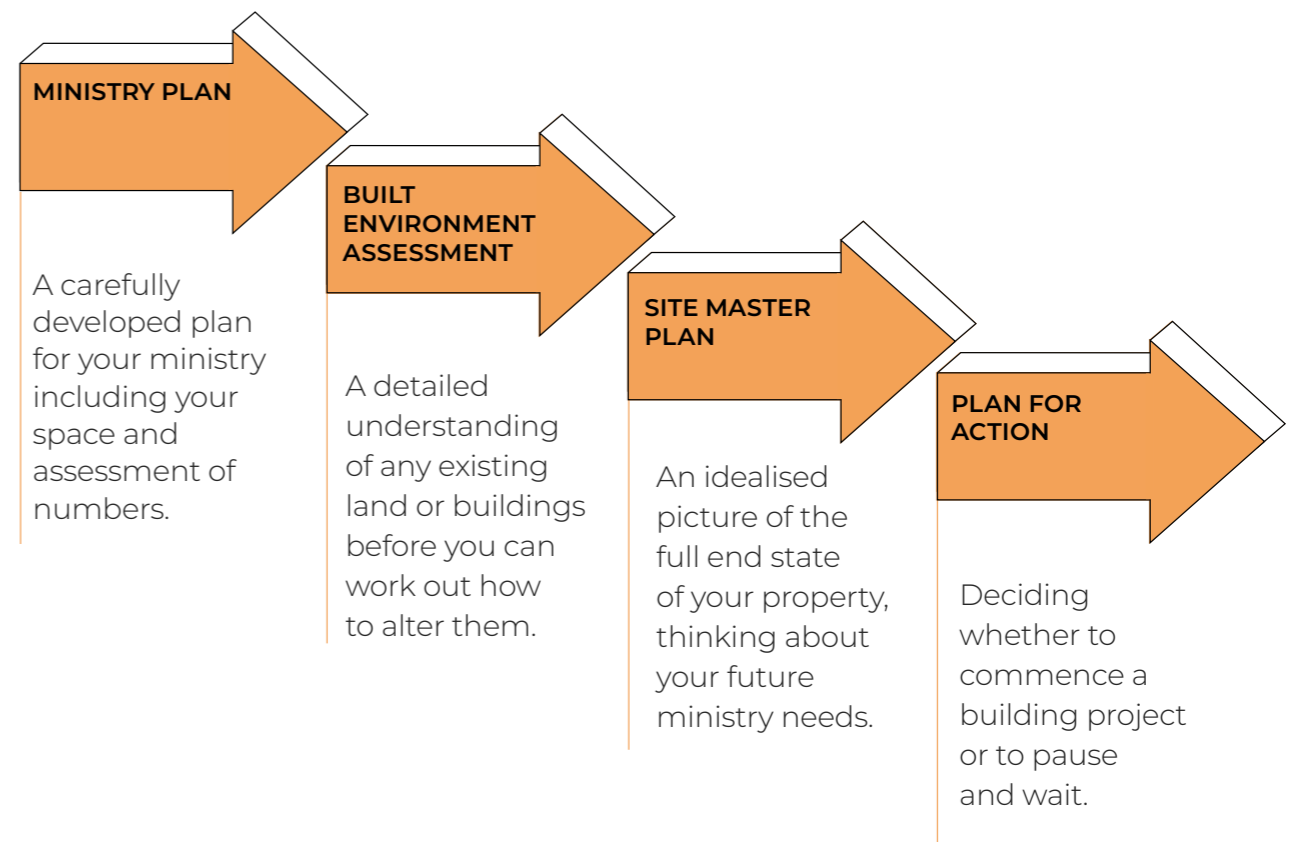
02

Through years of experience, we've seen that successful church building projects always include the same four critical steps. Ignoring any of these leads to poor outcomes. But when done well, these steps create a foundation for effective, long-term gospel ministry.

Getting this right or wrong can shape your church's ministry for decades. A well-planned building serves the mission of the church, while poor decisions can create ongoing frustrations, unnecessary costs, and obstacles to ministry growth.

The good news? Avoiding a few key mistakes and following a structured process can make all the difference. This is a short booklet, designed to give you clarity on who to talk to, what to focus on, where to get help, and the key mistakes to avoid.

Our prayer is that this resource will serve you well in ministry, helping you plan wisely and build for the future so that more people will come to know Jesus and grow in him for generations to come.



03

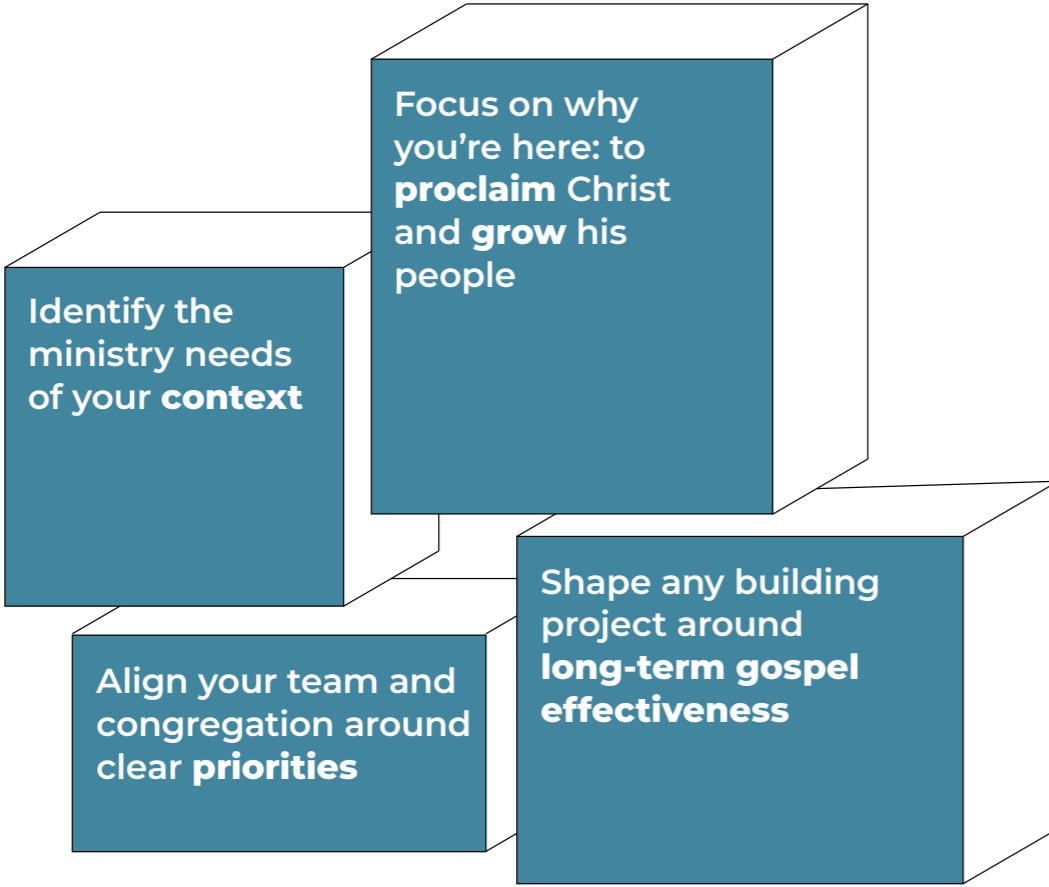
MINISTRY PLAN

A ministry plan is a clear five to ten year roadmap to help your church make and grow disciples of Jesus with clarity, purpose, and alignment.

It's not about chasing growth but about stewarding the people and opportunities God has placed before you.

Before you plan what to build, you need to be clear on what ministry you're building for. Buildings don't grow churches - God does.

A building project without a ministry plan often results in spaces that serve past needs, or nobody's needs.



04

NEXT STEPS: Complete the ministry plan worksheets starting on page 26

REACH AUSTRALIA'S FRAMEWORK FOR A HEALTHY CHURCH

A ministry plan helps you plan for growth across your church ecosystem:



HOW TO START FORMING A MINISTRY PLAN

<p>1. NOW</p> <p>Where are we now?</p> <p>Reflect on your current reality.</p> <p>What's healthy? What's missing? Where is ministry strained or stagnant? How healthy is your discipleship pathway?</p>	<p>2. WHERE</p> <p>What are we praying and planning for?</p> <p>What kind of disciple-making church do you want to be in 10 years?</p> <p>Define faithful and fruitful outcomes across the ecosystem.</p> <p>Be prayerful, not just practical.</p>	<p>3. HOW</p> <p>How will we do it?</p> <p>What are your options?</p> <p>Decide priorities. Set clear, actionable steps.</p> <p>Who's responsible? What's realistic? What facilities or staffing will be needed to support this?</p>
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CREATING A MINISTRY PLAN HELPS YOUR CHURCH GAIN CLARITY AND ALIGNMENT. WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO SEEK SUPPORT FROM WISE COUNSEL OR HAVE A CHURCH CONSULT THAT CAN GUIDE YOU THROUGH THE PROCESS.

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." Matthew 28:19-20

CASE STUDY

Church A Big build, missed ministry

Church A had been praying for growth, and when it finally came, they acted fast.

Excited by rising attendance and with a generous building fund available, leadership decided to expand.

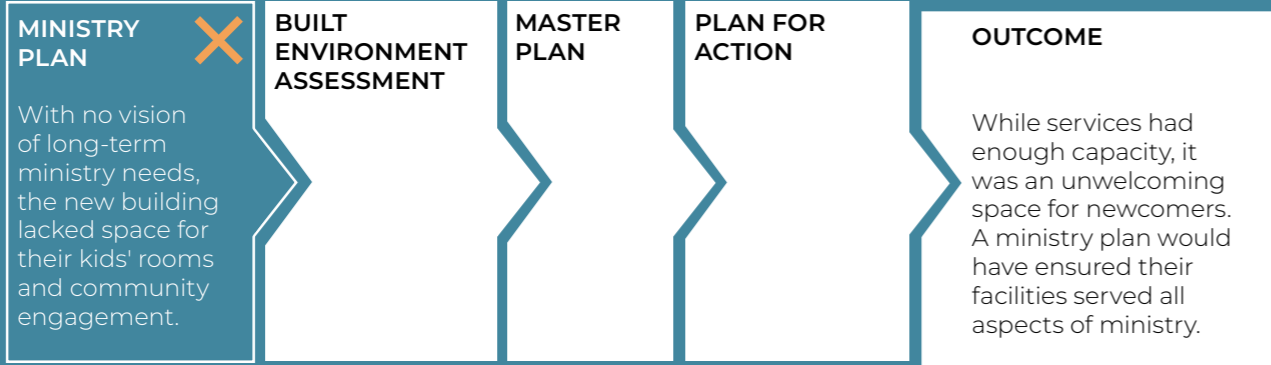
But instead of pausing to consider a ministry plan, they jumped straight into design and construction, focusing mostly on seating capacity and car parking.

The new auditorium was large and impressive, but once the excitement wore off, problems quickly surfaced. There were no additional kids' rooms to support their growing families, no breakout spaces for discipleship or community engagement, and no flexible areas for weekday ministry.

The church had built for crowds, but not for community.

Over time, the gaps became harder to ignore. Families felt squeezed, volunteers were discouraged, and many opportunities for deeper ministry were lost. Leaders reflected that the project had been driven by urgency, not clarity.

Had Church A begun with a solid ministry plan, they could have designed a space that supported their full church ecosystem - not just the Sunday gathering. The building became a symbol of missed opportunity. It could have been so much more if the foundation had been a clear vision for ministry, rather than a rush to accommodate growth.



Please note: Some details in this case study have been changed for privacy.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT ASSESSMENT

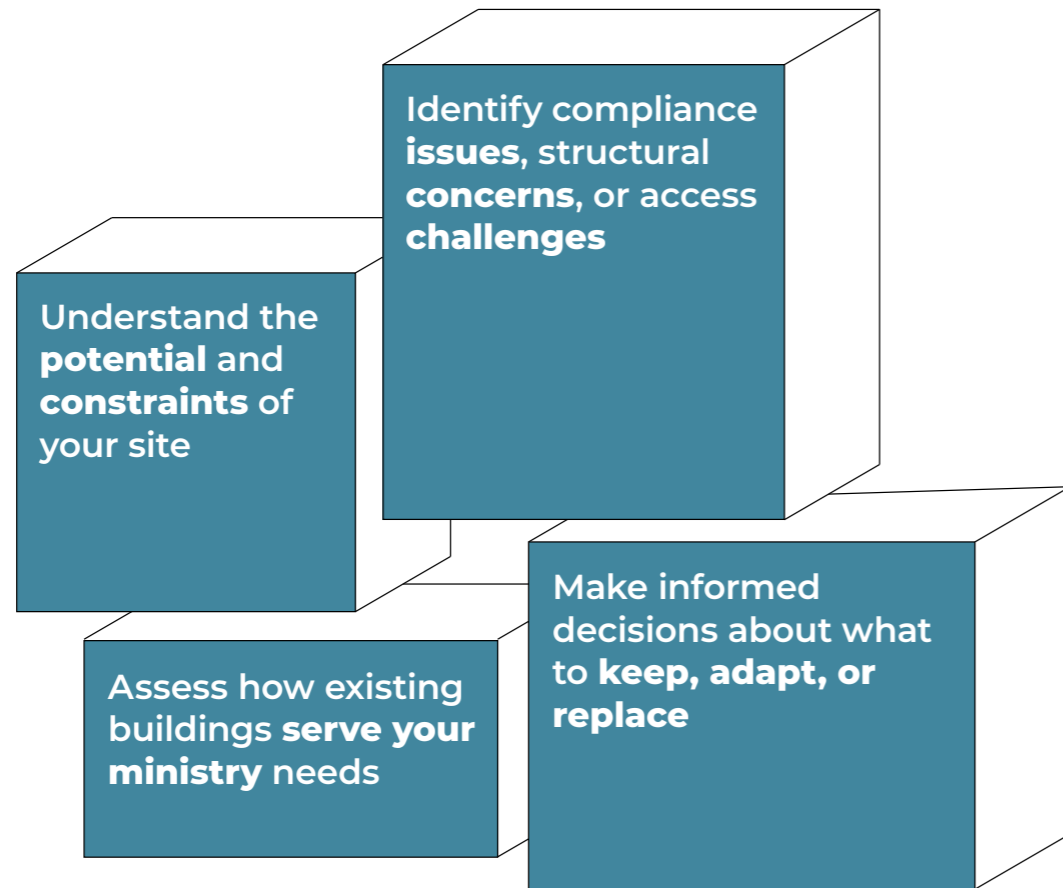
05

Before you can plan your site or commit to a project, you need clarity about your land, existing buildings, and infrastructure.

How are the existing buildings performing? What are the limitations? What risks or opportunities are hidden beneath the surface?

A built environment assessment helps you understand what you already have, so you can plan for what's next. Without it, decisions are made in the dark.

An accurate, professional assessment helps you avoid surprises later, saving time, money, and future frustration.



HOW TO START FORMING A BUILT ENVIRONMENT ASSESSMENT

This matrix breaks the assessment into three key layers. Together, they provide a practical framework for evaluating how well your property supports your mission today, and how it might evolve for the future.

1. SITE CONDITIONS

Your site is a complex system of physical, legal and logistical characteristics that must be understood before planning can begin.

Site conditions include things like topography, orientation, vehicle and pedestrian access, services, zoning overlays, bushfire risk, flood zones, heritage constraints, and environmental factors.

2. EXISTING BUILDINGS

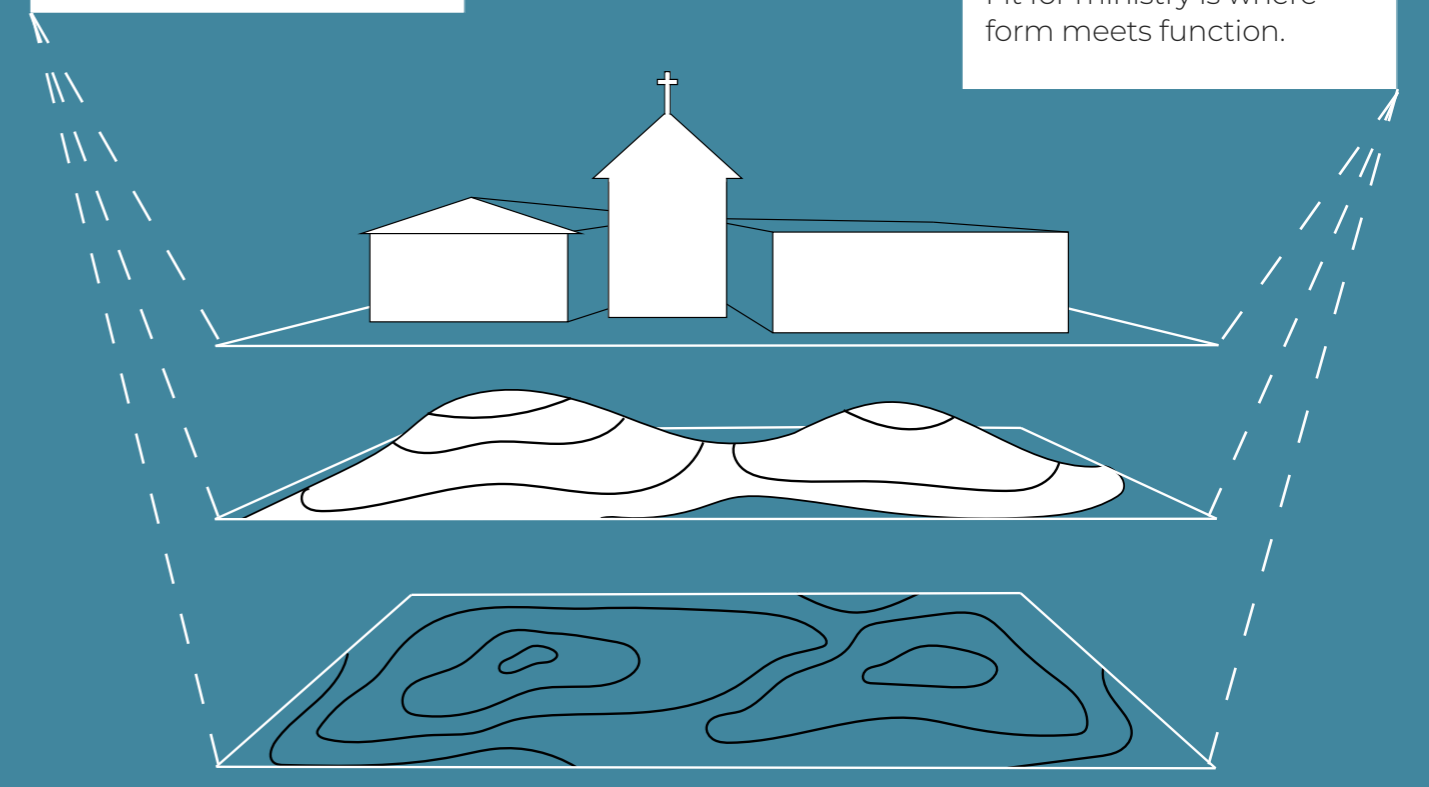
Understanding your current buildings is crucial before deciding what to change, remove, or retain. This includes structural condition, accessibility, code compliance, layout functionality, safety, and service capability.

It's not just about aesthetics and age, it's about suitability. An old building may still be useful, while a newer one might limit future flexibility.

3. FIT FOR MINISTRY

Beyond compliance and condition, your buildings and spaces need to serve your church's mission. This considers how your physical environment supports or limits ministry: the flow of people on a Sunday, the availability of gathering spaces, children's areas, weekday uses, and connections with community.

Fit for ministry is where form meets function.



NEXT STEPS: Complete the assessment worksheets starting on page 28

"Prepare your work outside; get everything ready for yourself in the field, and after that build your house." Proverbs 24:27

CASE STUDY

Church B Clarity before construction

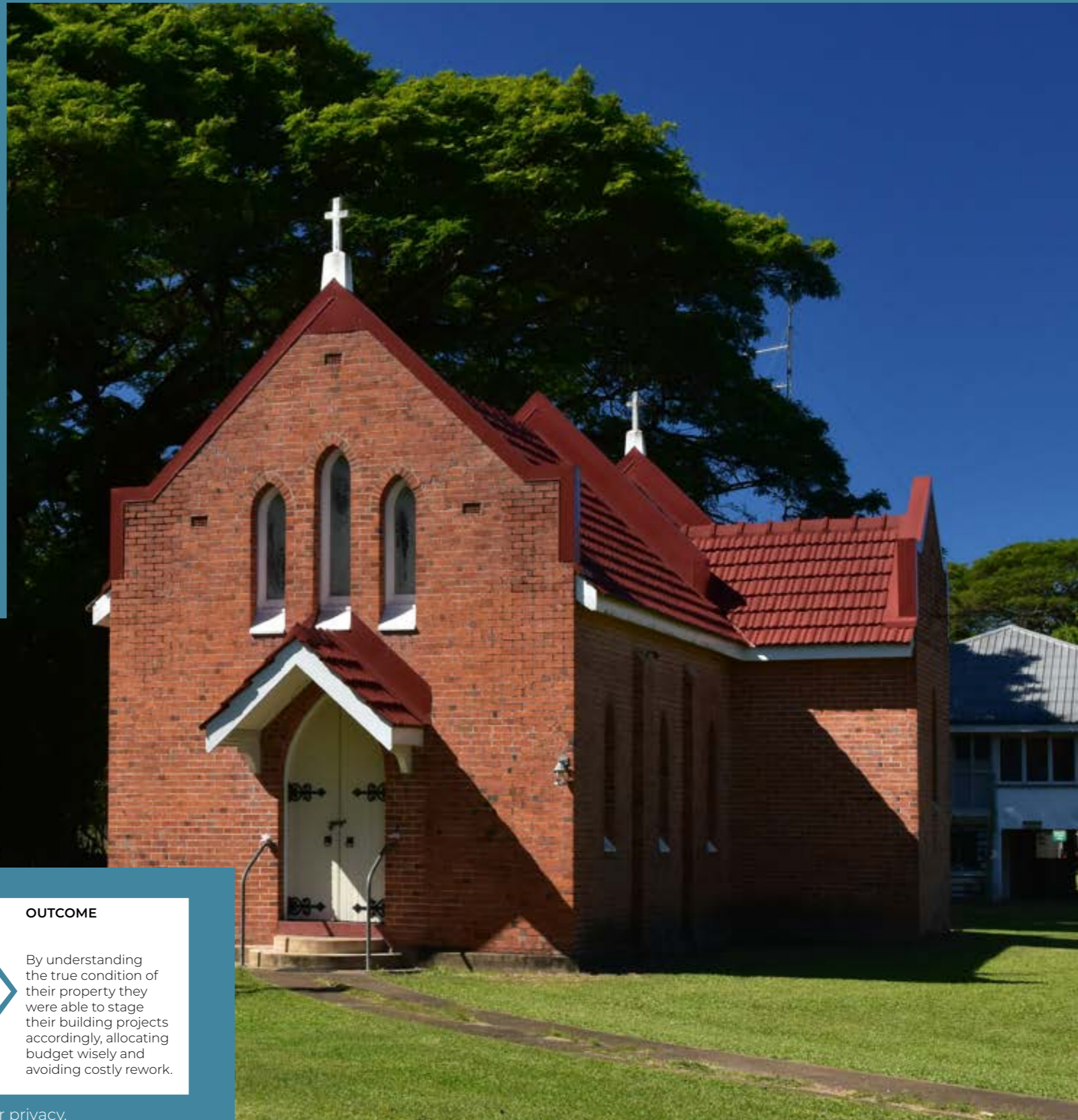
Church B had a strong ministry plan and a clear vision for how their site could support future growth. Before jumping into design, they committed to a full built environment assessment to understand the true condition of their property.

The assessment uncovered several critical issues. Most notably, their main building did not meet current accessibility standards, and the sewer infrastructure was insufficient for future expansion. These findings could have caused major disruptions if discovered later. But because they were identified early, Church B had

the opportunity to address them before design began.

The team worked with experts to revise their plans, prioritise upgrades, and stage their building projects accordingly. This early insight allowed them to allocate budget wisely, avoid rework, and maintain momentum.

By taking the time to assess their built environment, Church B turned potential roadblocks into proactive design solutions, ensuring that their site could support ministry both now and into the future.



MINISTRY PLAN

BUILT ENVIRONMENT ASSESSMENT ✓

By completing a thorough assessment they uncovered several critical issues that needed to be addressed.

MASTER PLAN

PLAN FOR ACTION

OUTCOME

By understanding the true condition of their property they were able to stage their building projects accordingly, allocating budget wisely and avoiding costly rework.

Please note: Some details in this case study have been changed for privacy.

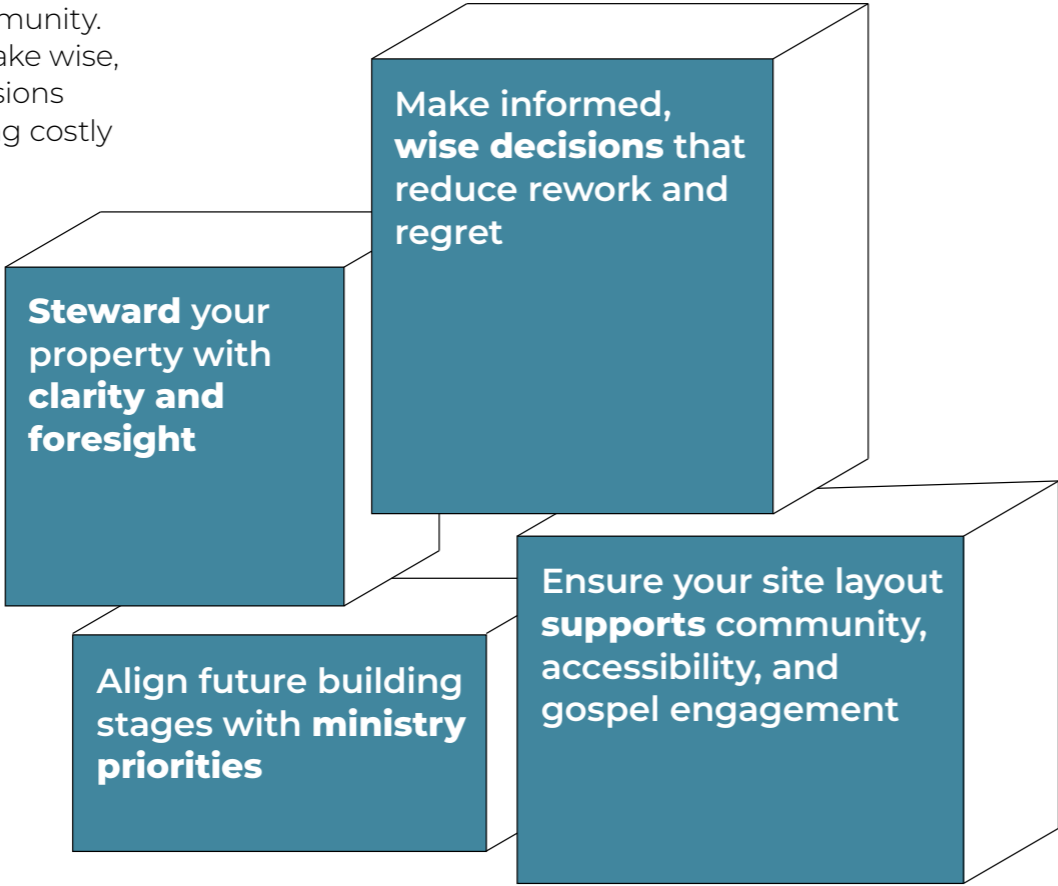
SITE MASTER PLAN

A site master plan is where you start to bring together the ministry plan and the built environment assessment and ask: 'How can this place best support gospel ministry, now and in 5, 10, even 30 years?'

Rather than jumping straight into building works or reacting to urgent needs, a site master plan helps you look at the whole picture. It brings your ministry vision and practical needs together, showing how buildings, outdoor spaces, and more, can work together to serve your church community. This helps you make wise, coordinated decisions over time, avoiding costly

mistakes and ensuring you move in the right direction. Ultimately, a site master plan is about stewardship. It's about shaping your property to support ministry, making room for people to encounter Jesus and grow in faith.

Developing a site master plan is specialised work. Engaging an architect early will ensure your planning becomes a purposeful reality. And the thinking you do here will make that process even stronger.



06

NEXT STEPS: Complete the master plan worksheets starting on page 30

CONSIDERING YOUR CHURCH ECOSYSTEM'S ENVIRONMENT

A healthy church needs a physical environment that supports and reflects its vision. This diagram overlays Reach Australia's framework for a healthy church with key considerations in a site master plan, forming what we call the ecosystem's environment.



HOW TO START THINKING ABOUT A SITE MASTER PLAN

<p>1. NOW</p> <p>Where are we now?</p> <p>Reflect on your current reality.</p> <p>What's working well and what isn't? What's missing? Where is ministry constrained or amenity impacted? Is your space a place people want to be?</p>	<p>2. WHERE</p> <p>What are we praying and planning for?</p> <p>What kind of place do you want to be in 5 or 10 years?</p> <p>Define faithful and fruitful outcomes across the ecosystem environment.</p> <p>Be prayerful, not just practical.</p>	<p>3. HOW</p> <p>How will we do it?</p> <p><i>You will likely need professional help to support this, but it is worth thinking through:</i></p> <p>What are your options? Decide priorities. Who's responsible? What's realistic? What resources will be needed to support this?</p>
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THESE STEPS ARE DESIGNED TO PUT YOU IN A STRONG POSITION, BUT THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING. NOW IS THE TIME TO SPEAK WITH A PROFESSIONAL TO HELP DEVELOP YOUR PLANNING TOWARDS REALITY.

*"Vision is the art of seeing what is invisible to others."
- Jonathan Swift*

CASE STUDY

Church C One plan, clear direction

Church C had a big vision. With new land secured and a growing number of young families in their congregation, they knew their next steps needed to be intentional. They weren't just building for today, they were planning for future generations. The leadership wanted to create flexible spaces for kids and youth ministries that could adapt as the church grew, while still feeling connected to the life of the wider church.

Rather than jumping into isolated building projects, they worked through each planning step, developing a strong ministry plan, conducting a thorough built environment assessment, and engaging an architect to help translate their vision into a long-term site master plan. Because they had already done the groundwork, they were able to present a clear and thoughtful brief to their architect.

The architect helped the church see new opportunities. They recommended ways to position and link the kids and youth spaces with other ministry areas to develop a greater sense of community across age groups. Covered walkways, shared outdoor zones, and a central gathering space became key design features that supported ministry logistics and created natural opportunities for intergenerational connection.

By taking the time to plan well and collaborate with experts, Church C avoided costly missteps and unlocked far more than they had initially imagined. Their master plan now provides a flexible, welcoming campus that serves families today and is ready to grow with them into the future.



MINISTRY PLAN

BUILT ENVIRONMENT ASSESSMENT

SITE MASTER PLAN ✓

They engaged a professional to create a plan that responded to their ministry needs in practical ways.

PLAN FOR ACTION

OUTCOME

By taking extra time to complete all of the foundational planning, they achieved far more than they had initially imagined they now have a welcoming campus to serve generations to come.

Please note: Some details in this case study have been changed for privacy.

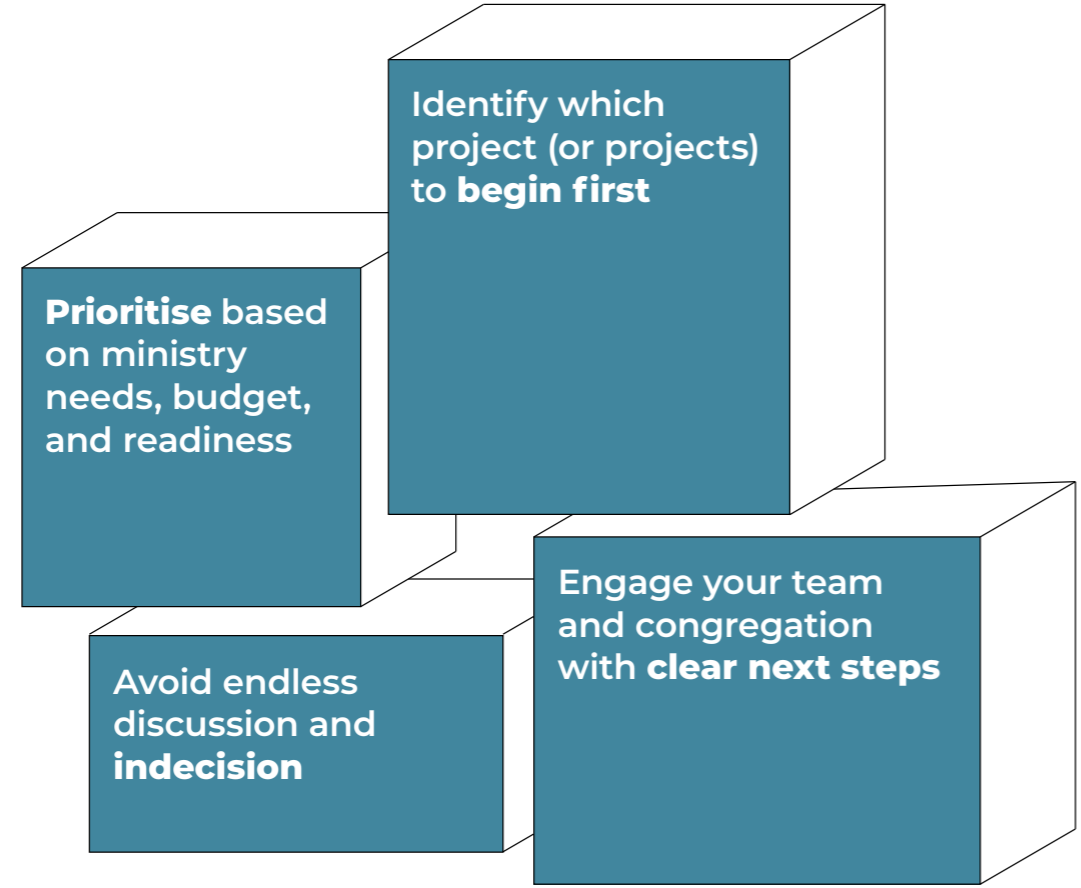
PLAN FOR ACTION

Once your ministry plan is clear, your built environment is understood, and your site master plan is in place, it's time to decide what to do next.

This is where ideas turn into decisions. A plan for action helps your church move from vision to reality. It clarifies which projects to begin, what the timeline might be, who needs to

be involved, and what early steps will build momentum. It doesn't mean you have to start building straight away. Sometimes the wisest action is to pause.

Sometimes it's best to begin with a small, achievable win. But it always means deciding to move forward with purpose.



07

IT TAKES TIME

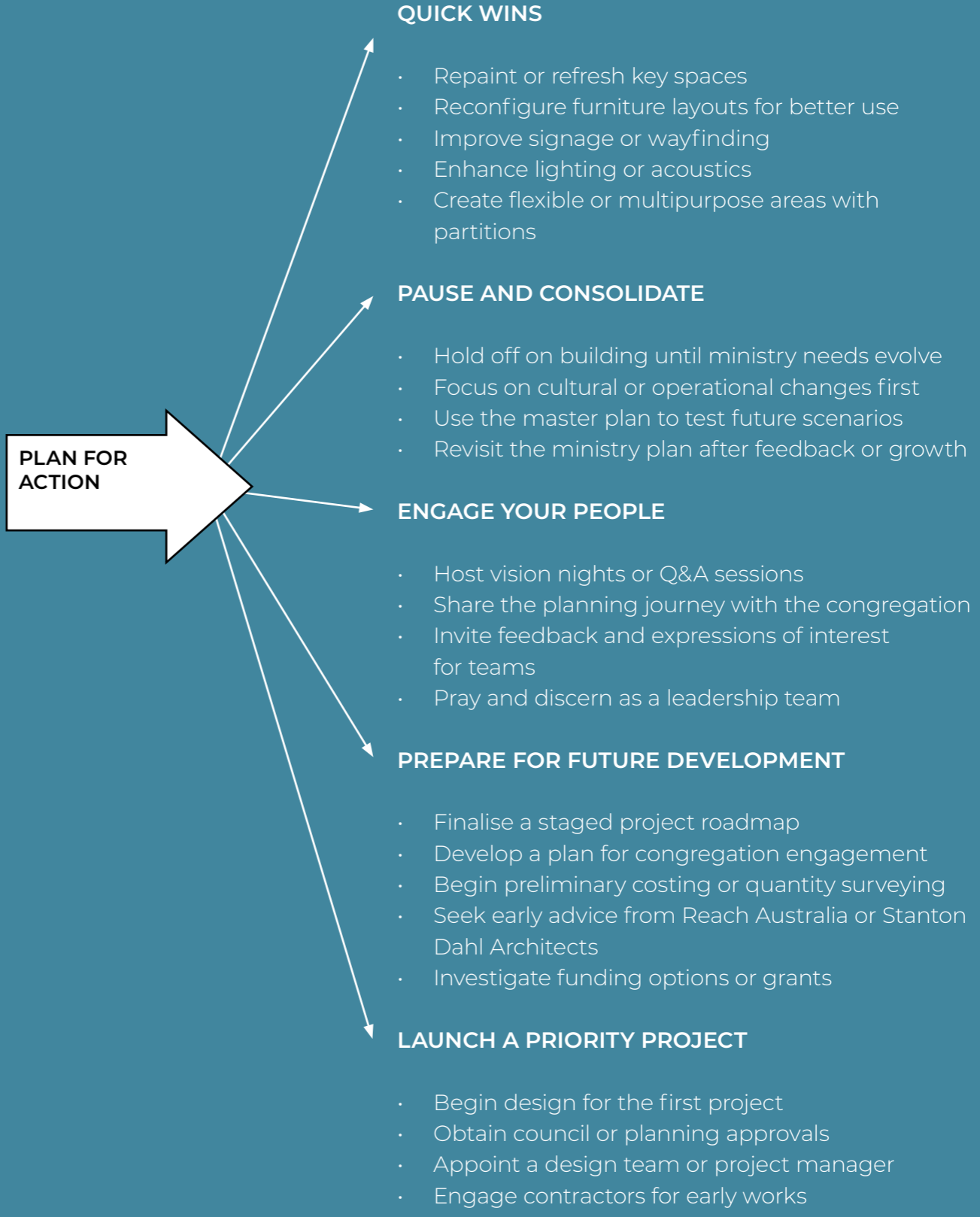


Church building projects always take longer than people (including building industry experts) think. This is because there are many stakeholders and because church buildings have complexity. They are often opposed by locals and local councils. Knowing this helps with:

1. Setting realistic expectations.
2. Understanding that you should start now.

HOW TO START TURNING VISION INTO ACTION

Here are some steps your church might be ready to take after completing the ministry plan, assessing your built environment and developing a site master plan. The next steps is to decide how, and when, to move forward.



“The opportunity of a lifetime must be seized within the lifetime of the opportunity”
 – Leonard Ravenhill

CASE STUDY

Church D Clear plans, no progress

Church D had done all the groundwork. They had a clear ministry plan, a thorough assessment of their property, and a well-developed site master plan. The vision was strong. The needs were clear.

But when it came time to decide on next steps, the process ground to a halt.

Leaders felt unsure which project to begin with. There were questions about timing, funding and congregation readiness. So they formed a subcommittee. Then another. They revisited the master plan again and again, but never committed to action.

Years passed. Momentum faded. Ministry needs went unmet.

Eventually, some of the planning documents became outdated. Costs had increased. And what once felt exciting now felt like a burden.

Progress needs a decision. If Church D had made even a small move, such as painting a key space, upgrading signage, or starting with one achievable stage, they could have built momentum and confidence.

A plan for action isn't about doing everything. It's about doing something in alignment with your mission.

The best plans mean nothing if they're not acted on.



MINISTRY PLAN

BUILT ENVIRONMENT ASSESSMENT

SITE MASTER PLAN

PLAN FOR ACTION



Leadership couldn't agree on the right timing or approach. Changing priorities, risk-averse decision makers and resistance led to endless discussions.

OUTCOME

Years passed, and the church remained in its outdated, impractical space. Ministry suffered, volunteers grew frustrated and momentum was lost. The hard work of planning was wasted.

Please note: Some details in this case study have been changed for privacy.

A PLANNING CYCLE

There is an obvious progression in the four critical steps model we have outlined here. However, the process is also cyclical.

Logically, each step must come before the next. The ministry plan needs to inform the built environment assessment. The ministry plan and the built environment assessment need to inform the site master plan. Once this is done, a plan for action with sequenced subprojects and robust costings can be developed.

There is usually a need to revisit plans as further information about the existing building or the development approach is uncovered. New information may impact on the original ministry plan.

The built environment assessment may change the understanding of the underlying building and what can be done with it. A site master plan may uncover blockages, altered sequencing of subprojects, or new opportunities not considered in the original

ministry plan. The plan for action stage may reveal cost, revenue or sequencing implications. These implications may not have been known in the first three steps.

In each case, the ministry plan needs to be amended with the new information that the four critical steps process has revealed, before the process cycle is repeated again.

While this may sound tedious, in reality this is just the rigorous application of common sense. The more familiar the project leaders become with the project and its constraints, the better the ministry plan will become, and the faster the cycles will go. In reality, many new pieces of information will work through this grid in the early stages of project development.

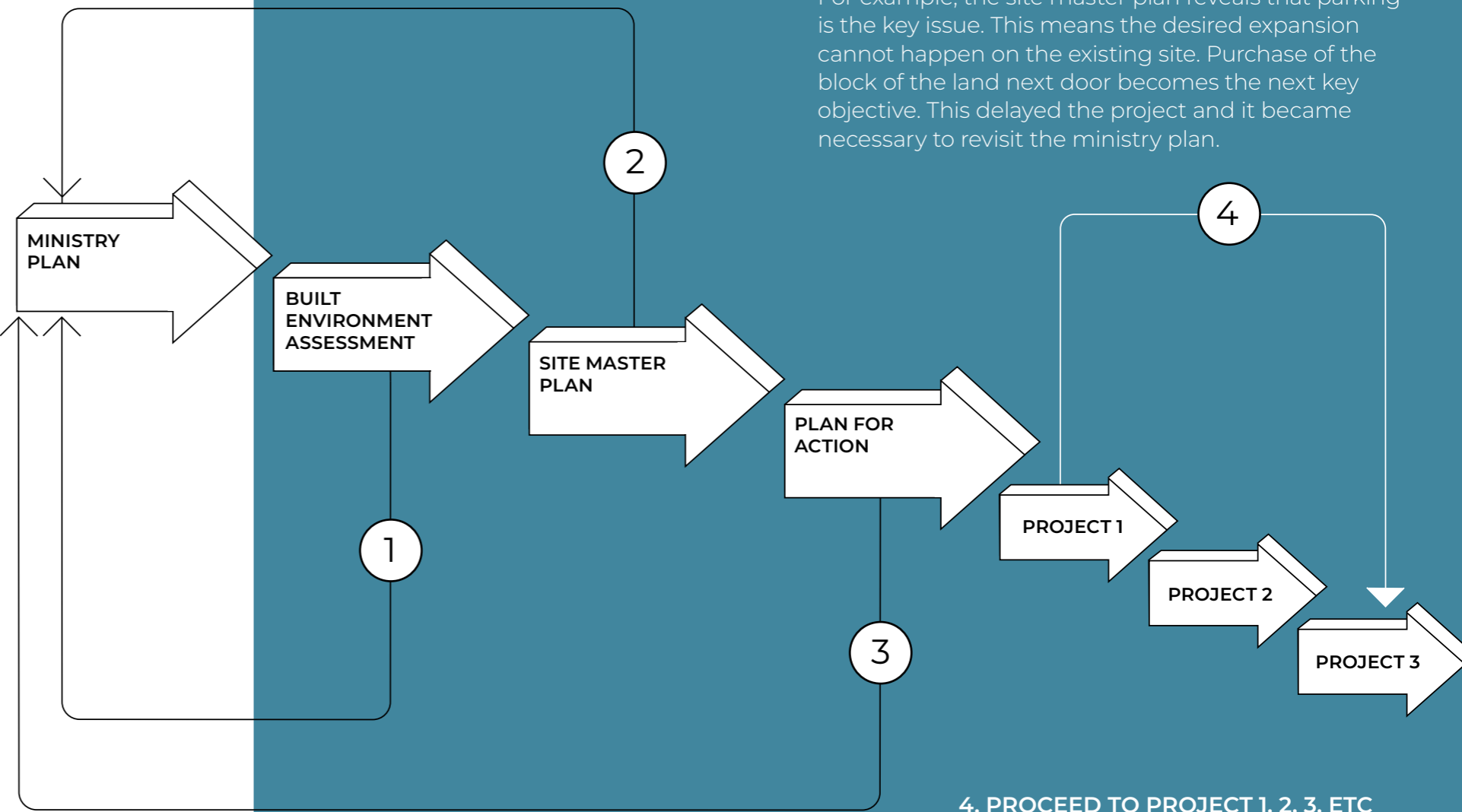


1. CYCLE BACK FROM BUILT ENVIRONMENT ASSESSMENT TO MINISTRY PLAN

For example, a church wants to increase its size by 50%. The built environment assessment reveals that the roof is about to collapse, and it requires expensive repair before anything else is done. This extension of the building necessitates a change of the ministry plan.

2. CYCLE BACK FROM SITE MASTER PLAN TO MINISTRY PLAN

For example, the site master plan reveals that parking is the key issue. This means the desired expansion cannot happen on the existing site. Purchase of the block of the land next door becomes the next key objective. This delayed the project and it became necessary to revisit the ministry plan.



3. CYCLE BACK FROM 'PLAN FOR ACTION' TO 'MINISTRY PLAN'

The building is good and the site master plan is good. Negotiation happens along the way for a low income housing project as part of the site. More money is available and what was planned for a 5 year project can be done within 2 years. Now you have to revisit the ministry plan to make adjustments.

4. PROCEED TO PROJECT 1, 2, 3, ETC

If your ministry vision is clear, your site well understood, and there's unity, readiness, and support, it's a good time to begin Project 1, 2, or 3. Starting with a well-scoped stage can build confidence and serve immediate needs. But if priorities are unclear, leadership is in transition, or circumstances have changed, it may be wiser to pause. Waiting allows for alignment and stewardship, so when you do act, you do so with clarity and purpose.

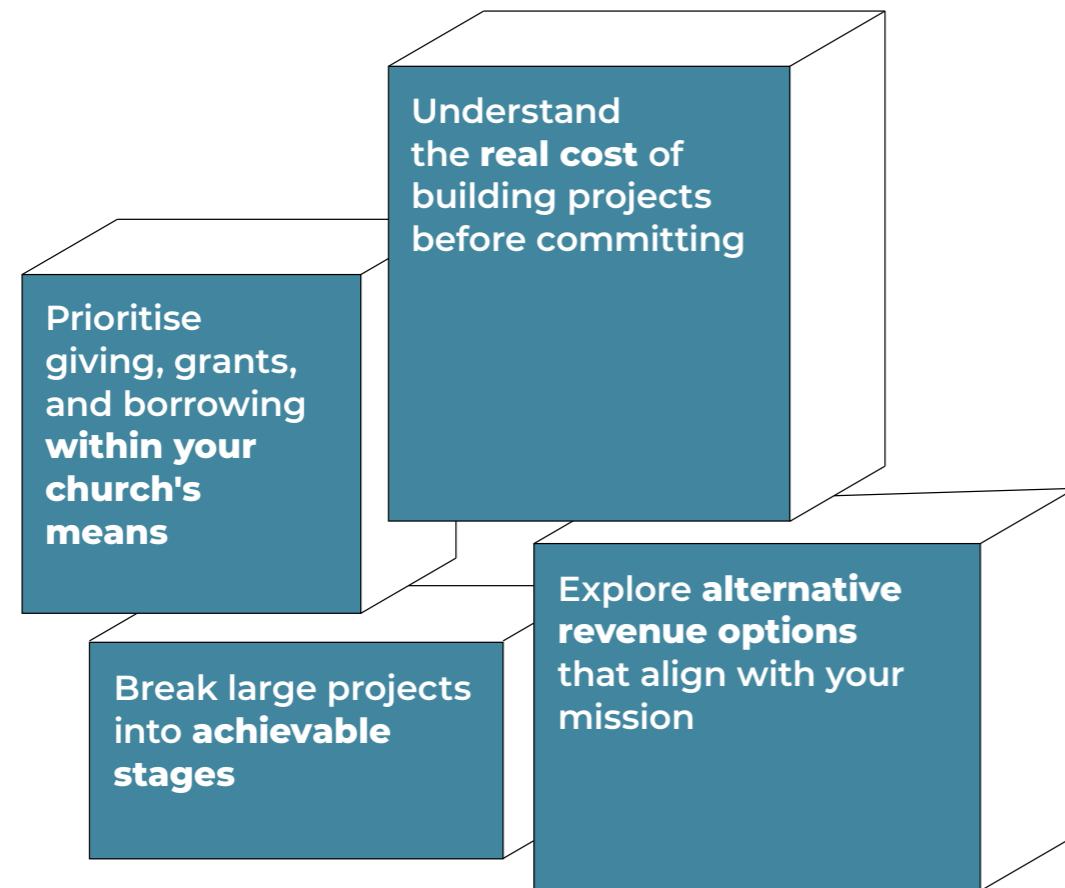
A QUIET WORD ON MONEY

Money sits behind all of the steps outlined in this guide. Buildings are expensive. However, the land our churches sit on is very valuable.

This means costs, fundraising, and other revenue sources are a key part of the process.

Remember every church and project is different. Get advice to accurately determine the costs

of your ideas, and to think about fundraising campaigns that may be needed.



SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Here are some common questions we are often asked about buildings and money. These concepts can help you with initially scoping your projects.

How much will it cost?

This will change as your plans become more concrete, but it will invariably be more than initial estimates.

How much can I afford to borrow?

Typically, banks will allow you to borrow around 50% of the resale value of your property. In planning for serviceability of long-term debt, assess your interest at 8-10%.

There are grants available!

There are state and federal government grants for community organisations. These can help with early confidence-building projects.

How much can I fundraise?

A well-run fundraising campaign can raise around two times annual giving.

For example, if your church annual giving is \$200,000 to \$300,000, you could potentially fundraise \$400,000 to \$600,000 during a campaign.

What is a well-run fundraising campaign?

A key part of a well-run campaign is that you have established what you are about as a church, and you can show how the project supports those gospel outcomes.

It is important to note a well-run campaign requires a lot of work. It will require many months of concerted work.

Should I do the big project first or the small project first?

Understanding costs and alternate revenue streams can help you break the project into parts to keep momentum going even if you can't do the big project yet. This is why unlocking and staging your projects is really important.

How can I make money from my building?

There are many ways to use your land to raise revenue.

In some cases, the cost of binding the church's assets

and the management problem that comes from sharing your site outweigh the benefits.

In other cases, these arrangements can generate lots of money for a gospel purpose. In some cases, these initiatives can attract government support. These include:

- Preschools
- Disability housing
- Affordable housing
- Market rentals
- Low income housing
- Commercial or industrial real estate.

Should I sell my land to fund a project?

Never sell land unless you are using the money to buy land. To do otherwise is to take steps that compromise what future generations can inherit and build upon.

*"Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed."
Proverbs 15:22*

Use these worksheets to help you begin considering your ministry plan, built environment assessment, and site master plan.

These worksheets are here to help you lay those foundations. They will surface the right questions, prompt important conversations, and give you space to think carefully about your ministry needs, your current property, and your future potential.

We know that not every church has building specialists on hand. That's why these tools are designed to be practical and accessible. To get started you just need a willingness to listen, learn, and look. They'll help you

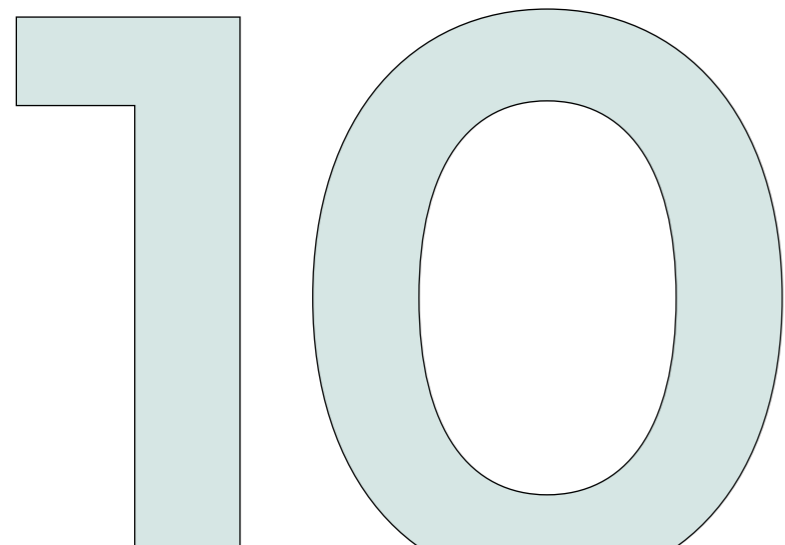
take stock of what you have, where you feel called to go, and what might be needed along the way.

That said, some sections may feel detailed or raise questions you don't yet have answers for, and that's perfectly okay. Don't let uncertainty hold you back.

Use what's helpful for your context, skip what feels out of reach, and come back to it when you're ready. This process isn't about having it all figured out, it's about taking a faithful first step.

And remember, you don't need to do it alone. If the questions start raising more questions, that's a great sign it's time to connect with a professional. Whether it's refining your ministry vision or translating that vision into a master plan, engaging with experienced advisors like Reach Australia or Stanton Dahl Architects can make all the difference.

These worksheets are just the beginning, but they can take you a long way!



DOWNLOAD DIGITAL WORKSHEETS

It might be easier to type on or print out these worksheets. To download a digital version of this booklet visit:

**STANTONDAHL.COM.AU/
BUILDTOLAST**



1. Ecosystem [year] ministry plan

[A 1-2 page overview of your overall church direction for the coming year, followed by one page summaries of the strategic plan for each key outcome or focus area. Anything in square brackets can either be deleted or replaced with info relevant to your church]

[This section might cover key overarching objectives for the coming year, or that are impacted by the whole ecosystem of church. For example: attendance, visitors, systems, infrastructure. These high level objectives then inform the key objectives for other teams.]

Desired Outcomes	Vision/Purpose [Vision for this outcome area, supporting the overall vision of the church] Key Outcomes [List of key things this area is trying to achieve — e.g. build a culture of serving across all of church life, or build pathways and run programs that evangelise non-Christians. The indicators below will be those that best signify that progress is being made towards these desired outcomes]			
People/Team	[Outcome leader + key teams & team leader(s)]			
Key Programme/Project	[The one or two key programs you run that help push towards the overarching desired outcome for this area. These are the main things you do in this area]			
Goals (Now - where)	Health Indicator	Current Trend	[Next year]	[3-5 years]

[Practical measures that indicate progress towards desired outcomes articulated above - look at current trend, set goals for each indicator for 1 year from now and 3-5 years from now]

Ministry Plans (How)	Strategic Priority	By?	Who is Responsible?
[Reflect on what you did last year, what should you STOP, START, CONTINUE. Brainstorm with the team and do a cost/benefit analysis of different options]	[Strategic priority #1]	[Q1]	
	[Strategic priority #2]	[Q2]	
	[Strategic priority #3]	[Q3]	

2. Ministry Plan Checklist

<p>1. Is it properly formed?</p>	<p>A properly formed ministry plan is one that's been carefully thought through-not rushed, not copied from another church, and not vague. It should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Core values and theological convictions Clear ministry priorities (e.g. discipleship, outreach, worship, care) Concrete goals with timelines
<p>2. Is It socialised?</p>	<p>A great plan doesn't do much if it stays in a drawer. To be 'socialised' means that the ministry plan has been shared with and embraced by your congregation and leadership.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have your staff, elders, volunteers, and members seen it? Do they understand it? Are they aligned with it?
<p>3. Is it documented?</p>	<p>This is about clarity and accessibility. Is your ministry plan written down in a clear and organised format? Not just scattered across emails or meetings, but:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A real, readable document or presentation Something you can give to new leaders, staff or even an architect A tool to revisit and revise as needed Documentation that helps ensure continuity and shared understanding
<p>4. Are you working from that plan now?</p>	<p>The plan isn't helpful if it's theoretical. This question checks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are your current ministries aligned with the plan's priorities? Is your budgeting, staffing, and scheduling guided by the plan? Are you regularly referring back to the plan in decision-making? This helps reveal whether your plan is actually in use or if it's just a hopeful idea.
<p>5. Does it describe in sufficient detail, a reasonable path into the future?</p>	<p>Here, you're checking how future-focused and actionable your ministry plan is.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does it help guide decisions 1, 3, and 5 years out? Are there milestones and adaptability built in? Does it consider your community's trends, potential growth, and changes in demographics or needs? This question ensures your plan is forward-thinking and not just a snapshot of the present.

3. Built Environment Initial Assessment Checklist

<p>1. Site Conditions</p> <p>Assess the physical, legal and regulatory realities of your land.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there known issues with stormwater drainage, flood risk or topography? Are services like power, water, sewer, and telecommunications sufficient for future growth? Are there any easements, heritage overlays, or zoning restrictions? Are there bushfire, noise, or environmental sensitivities on or near the site? Is access and parking compliant with regulations and suitable for ministry use? Have you reviewed the property title, including any restrictions or rights-of-way? Are there legal or ecclesiastical requirements affecting how the land can be developed? Will any changes trigger a new Development Application (DA) or planning process? Is there clarity about ownership and decision-making authority for the land? Are you aware of relevant building codes, fire safety regulations, or NCC (National Construction Code) implications?
<p>2. Existing Buildings</p> <p>Get a clear picture of building condition, compliance, and maintenance needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the foundations stable and free of cracking or movement? Is there evidence of rising damp, roof leaks, or stormwater ingress? Are there structural concerns (e.g., movement, cracking, sagging)? What is the condition of the roof, cladding, and external finishes?

3. Built Environment Initial Assessment Checklist Continued

2. Existing Buildings continued

Are the electrical systems, lighting, and fire safety compliant and functional?

Has there been deferred maintenance or unresolved defects?

Are there issues with old stone, timber decay, or material erosion?

Are spaces accessible and up to current disability standards (DDA)?

What are the insurance, compliance, or certification risks in the current state?

3. Fit for Ministry

Understand how your buildings serve, or hinder, your mission

Are your spaces aligned with your ministry needs today and into the future?

Are there enough multipurpose spaces for discipleship, youth, children, and hospitality?

Are spaces easy to navigate, with good wayfinding and flow?

Do spaces create a sense of welcome, belonging, and dignity?

Are there barriers to inclusion, such as access or acoustics?

Are there tensions or sensitivities around changing heritage buildings or fitouts?

Are you able to use the site effectively for community engagement and mission?

What would your ministry look like if your property better supported it?

4. Site Master Plan Briefing Framework

Now that you have considered your ministry plan and built environment assessment, you might be ready to brief an architect. This document outlines the key information and questions that will help guide that conversation. A well-prepared brief ensures that your master plan reflects your ministry priorities, responds to your site conditions, and sets the stage for a buildable, future-ready solution.

1. Your Ministry Vision Summary

What is your church's long-term purpose and mission?

What has your ministry plan identified as your key priorities?

Who are you serving now, and who do you hope to serve?

2. Current Site Summary

What is the size and layout of your site? Include a site plan if available.

What buildings currently exist on the site?

What key findings came out of your built environment assessment?

4. Site Master Plan Briefing Document Continued

PLACE

Presence, Identity, Wayfinding

What kind of atmosphere do you want the site to convey (e.g. welcoming, peaceful, dynamic)?

What do people see and feel when they first arrive?

Does the site clearly express who you are and what you value?

Is there a visual connection between the physical site and your mission?

Could the design increase visibility or welcome to the broader community?

SPACE

Amenity, Flow, Adjacency

What are your current ministry space requirements (e.g. worship, kids, youth, offices, hospitality)?

What spaces are under strain or missing entirely?

What areas should feel connected (e.g. youth near worship, hospitality near foyer)?

Are there areas that need separation (e.g. quiet rooms, private counselling, storage)?

Are there shared facilities that could serve multiple groups?

Do any spaces need to accommodate flexible or multi-use setups?

4. Site Master Plan Briefing Document Continued

PURPOSE

Function, Use, Practicality

What are the immediate needs vs long-term aspirations?

Are there ministries or activities currently without a suitable space?

Are there new ministries or community partnerships on the horizon?

What matters most to your church in terms of how the site supports ministry?

Are there reference projects or imagery that help express your intent?

GROWTH

Staging, Expansion, Future-readiness

What growth in attendance or ministry activity do you anticipate over 5-15 years?

How should the site allow for future staging or expansion?

Could rooms or buildings serve multiple purposes across the week?

Are there options for modular or phased construction?

How will this plan support future generations?

5. Ministry Plan Supporting Information Checklist

These resources will help advisors bring clarity to your ministry priorities and ensure the ministry plan is grounded in current realities and future potential.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Current organisational structure and leadership responsibilities | <input type="checkbox"/> Financial snapshot and giving patterns |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attendance data (adults, youth, children, newcomers) | <input type="checkbox"/> Church mission, vision, and values statements |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ministry activity schedule across a typical week | <input type="checkbox"/> Any recent church health assessments or survey results |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Key ministry challenges or areas of growth | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community demographic insights (if available) | |

6. Site Master Plan Supporting Information Checklist

These documents will help your architect gain a full picture of your context, priorities, and opportunities for design.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Completed ministry plan worksheet | <input type="checkbox"/> Any past reports or feasibility studies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Completed built environment initial assessment | <input type="checkbox"/> Vision or branding documents (if applicable) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Existing site plan, if available | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Building photos or floorplans | |

This booklet was created to equip you to begin the journey of planning your church's property with clarity, purpose, and confidence. If you've worked through each step and completed the worksheets, you've already laid a strong foundation.

But you don't have to do it alone.

Get in touch with Reach Australia to refine your ministry plan, and connect with Stanton Dahl Architects to start shaping a site master plan that brings your vision to life.



We're a network of 450+ churches. We support new churches launching and develop church leaders to help see people saved across Australia.

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We work with churches across both regional and metropolitan Australia, and have partnered with 50+ Christian communities to design spaces that support gospel-centred ministry and long-term growth.

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HOW CAN WE HELP?



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