

## 4. Development & Mission

Churches in the city have seen development occurring around them. Sometimes the church owns land itself that has become much more valuable and can be or has been sold off to raise funds. This may seem to be in contrast to the original church members that gave sacrificially to purchase the land and construct the buildings. However the purpose of the gift was to uphold the church's mission. The increase in land value often has little to do with the actions of the church but is a result of commercial demand and planning control.

Some people lament that the church has previously sold off property around its buildings for development. "If only we still owned that, how valuable it would be...". However perhaps the church would then be sitting remotely in a paddock with the centre of the community having developed elsewhere. It is good for the church's mission for it to be located central to the community.

Jesus told us to be wise stewards of what we are given and to use our inheritance, "... To gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.". Luke 16: 9-12.

### Wise Stewards

In the 21st-century, I suggest that wisdom means:

1. Sometimes releasing value from property no longer needed to put into a new mission use. This might be to improve the churches building stock to serve its 21st-century needs, to employ additional pastoral staff or some other key purpose of the church's mission.
2. Leveraging best value for the church. The church should seek professional help to clarify the development opportunities. The likely value of the development can be set against costs of construction, support costs and developer profit (the cost of risk). From this the residual property value for the church can be predicted.
3. Ensuring that development will be an appropriate neighbour for the remaining refurbished church property alongside. As the incumbent landowner, the church can determine certain uses that it would not wish to see and can covenant these. It can decide that, if such restrictions degrade the value, that these will be better accepted for the sake of future mission.
4. That the group of buildings is designed to work together for the benefit of core mission. There may be an opportunity to create a common public space between the refurbished church buildings and the development. This can be a significant enhancement for both the church and the new development.



Churches can be in control in these situations, by having an independent professional architect lead or support the process of integrated mission and development master planning. This process involves specialist consultants to cover development, town planning and cost prediction that can be coordinated by the architect. The church is in the driving seat, aware of potential values and making mission-based decisions with professional advice.

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*Image: Melbourne Church Mission & Development Proposal*

