

**First Congregational Church of Bellingham
Assessment of Anticipated Giving
Executive Summary
March 2018**

Introduction

First Congregational Church of Bellingham engaged outside counsel to assist in preparing for a capital campaign to complete the build-out of the church basement, long designated for social justice purposes. The Ground Floor project is the culmination of fifteen years of planning and conversation about how best to use the designated space. A few years ago, the right opportunity presented itself, and the congregation has now entered into a memorandum of understanding with Northwest Youth Services (NWYS) to use the space as a day shelter for young adults ages 13-24* experiencing homelessness. The congregation will provide the space, and the agency will provide the services.

The study was conducted by Mary Gleason of Mary F Gleason Consulting, and Kris McRea, an associate of Mary F Gleason Consulting. The study was designed to determine the level of interest in and financial support for the congregation's proposed capital campaign to complete the build-out of The Ground Floor project.

*The age range for services has expanded to 13-24. The study focused on the initial age range of 18-24. This difference is not expected to impact support for the project.

Who Participated

A total of 30 households were invited to participate in the study. The study findings and conclusions are based on input from 21 households, which included 33 church members and friends. All but three interviews were conducted at the church on March 11 and 12. The remaining three were conducted by phone on March 12.

Participant Selection

The interview pool was selected to reflect the most generous annual operating contributors as well as representatives of formal and informal leaders in the community. Participants included members from all annual giving quartiles.

Survey Tool

The survey tool used in the interviews included 10 questions in three major categories:

- Affiliation with and affinity for FCCB
- Understanding of and support for The Ground Floor project
- Estimate of project support including financial and volunteer resources

Participants were allowed an opportunity to share any additional concerns and compliments about FCCB and the project. All responses are confidential and reported to the capital campaign fundraising committee and council in aggregate (e.g. how many times a specific comment, endorsement, question, or concern was raised and total giving estimation.)

Analysis and Conclusions

The members of FCCB are excited about The Ground Floor project and the alliance with Northwest Youth Services. Interviewees expressed a readiness to move forward with a campaign as soon as possible. As one respondent summarized: "This is the right project! ... Let's get going."

Based upon the findings and the consultants' analysis of the responses, and in combination with gifts already received, we conclude that First Congregational Church of Bellingham is ready to move ahead with an \$875,000 campaign. Even though the community is invited to also contribute to the project, it is important to remember that responsibility for raising all of the necessary funds for The Ground Floor project remains with the congregation. A conservative, minimum expectation of \$600,000 is estimated from congregation members with congregation-led efforts to raise the remainder through requests to the individuals and private funders in the community. Six hundred thousand dollars is only slightly higher than the \$575,000 raised for annual operations. Given that the campaign offers a three-year pledge period, this goal may well be exceeded.

A full report of next steps has been submitted to The Ground Floor capital campaign committee and the Council. With only minimal recommendations for communications and readiness, the campaign can proceed very soon. Exact timing will be announced by the committee when the schedule is finalized.

Conclusion

The excitement, anticipation, and consistent understanding of The Ground Floor project is a sign of a healthy faith community. Enjoy this time in the life of your congregation. You are doing amazing work by opening your church home and your wallets to assist those whose lives may be forever changed by your actions here today.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Gleason". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mary F Gleason Consulting