



**Revitalizing Sacred Spaces, Maximizing  
Impact for Ministry:**

## **A Guide to Community Engagement Services**

**Partners *for*  
Sacred Places**



**AT THE INTERSECTION  
OF HERITAGE, FAITH,  
& COMMUNITY**



# About Partners for Sacred Places

Partners for Sacred Places is the only national, non-sectarian nonprofit organization devoted to the preservation, sound stewardship, and active community use of sacred places across the United States. Working at the intersection of heritage, faith, and community, Partners' mission is to build a shared sense of responsibility for the future of sacred places.

## A Research-Driven Portfolio of Services

Since its founding in 1989, Partners has established a significant presence in over thirty cities and states, and worked intensively with more than 4,000 clergy and lay leaders, building the fundraising capacity and sustainability of more than 1,000 congregations, maximizing the value and impact of their sacred buildings for ministry. For three decades Partners has provided training, technical assistance, and grants to several thousand congregations and other local organizations, representing the needs and concerns of over 100,000 older, community-serving places in towns and cities in the U.S.

Partners for Sacred Places is dedicated to researching and developing tools and services that empower congregations, helping the stewards of sacred places articulate the social, cultural, and economic value of their buildings and ministries for the wider community. In addition to grass-roots work in communities, Partners also advocates on both the local and national stage for greater public investment in congregations and parishes, persuading individuals, foundations and government to free up additional resources for older houses of worship.

Since its founding, Partners for Sacred Places has worked with congregations to embrace the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) model. ABCD is a challenge to the traditional approach to rebuilding communities. It provides a new framework for thinking about neighborhoods and new strategies for mobilizing congregations in a positive way.

While traditional community development tends to focus on a neighborhood's deficiencies, the Asset-Based Community Development approach focuses on the gifts and talents of individuals and the capacity of neighbors and neighborhoods to be producers of change—to change communities from within. ABCD allows congregations to cultivate connections within the community, mobilize the capacities of local individuals, associations, and institutions and empower community residents to become leaders.



## Building Congregational Capacity through Transformative Workshops, Trainings, and Targetted Support

Over 30 years, Partners has established a groundbreaking reputation for developing new tools and programs that assist congregations in making the most of their properties as assets for ministry. Our resources focus on helping a congregation live out its mission by sharing its space, collaborating with its community, and serving its neighbors in new and powerful ways.

### *The New Dollars/New Partners Training*

New Dollars is a capacity-building training program that transforms how a congregation sees itself and its place in the community. Through the training process clergy and lay leaders discover and learn to articulate their church or synagogue's story in new ways, developing a compelling case statement that focuses on "who we are," "what we have," and "what we do."

New Dollars helps a congregation lay the foundation for cultivating and leveraging new relationships, allowing them to unleash their unique heritage as a tool for recruiting supporters, restoring their infrastructure, and revitalizing their community. New Dollars consists of four workshop modules, led by Partners' staff and expert consultants.

Training is delivered over several months to allow

congregations to put their newfound skills to work between each session.

The New Dollars training often serves as a catalyst for new community partnerships and strengthening existing relationships. When paired with Asset Mapping and the other tools outlined in the training toolkit, a congregation's growing network of stakeholders soon comes to encompass relationships with passionate local and regional advocates. Partners for Sacred Places has unparalleled expertise and experience with helping congregations leverage and expand upon their new relationships in creative ways that support ministry, programming, building care, and fundraising.

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### *Training Modules*

#### **Module I: Making the Case for Your Sacred Place**

Congregations begin by learning to articulate a compelling case for support based on the value of their architectural assets, their heritage in the context of the wider community, and the public value of their outreach and ministry.

#### **Module II: Developing New Community Partnerships**

Congregations learn the Asset-Based Community Development model, which furnishes leaders with new tools and strategies for expanding their church or synagogue's circle of community stakeholders and potential funders. This changes the way congregations view themselves and their relationship to other neighborhood institutions, enabling significant paradigm shifts and laying the groundwork for dynamic community partnerships.

#### **Module III: A Capital Campaign Primer & Tapping Community Funding Resources**

Congregations learn about asset-based practices for cultivating a strong culture of giving, as well as the structure and timeline of successful capital campaigns and initiatives. Trainees are introduced to the roles of congregational leadership, volunteers, and outside professionals in successful fundraising efforts.

#### **Module IV: Tapping Community Funding Resources**

Congregations learn how to conduct an external capital campaign and explore best practices by examining case-studies of community-wide fundraising campaigns conducted across the country. As a part of this session congregational leaders are guided through the development of an action plan to move forward toward their fundraising goals after the training is over.

## Linking the Congregation and the Neighborhood: Welcoming New Community Partners

Asset-Mapping is a powerful tool that Partners provides to help churches, synagogues, and other houses of worship identify new stakeholders and develop strategies for connecting congregational assets, particularly underutilized buildings and spaces, to other assets in the community—physical, individual, associational, and institutional.

### *Step One: Forming a Congregational Advisory Group*

To support the success of the asset mapping event, Partners helps the congregation identify and convene an Advisory Group composed of key community leaders.

The Advisors assist the church or synagogue with plans for the asset mapping, including identifying potential participants and inviting them on behalf of the congregation, and can play a longer-term role in supporting the congregation's larger work to ensure the future of its historic sacred place.

## Customized Courses for Individual Congregations, Regional Cohorts of Leaders, and Other Configurations

All of Partners Community Engagement services, including the New Dollars training and the Asset Mapping workshop, are fully customizable and can be delivered to groups of any size, ranging from individual congregations to cohorts of leaders gathered from across an entire region.





## *Step Two: Hosting an Asset Mapping Event with Leaders from the Outside Community*

In the Asset-Mapping process, a congregation's leaders, both lay and ordained, come together alongside stakeholders and leaders from the wider community to participate in a dynamic process, facilitated by Partners, that uncovers the full range of a church or synagogue's assets.

By exploring possibilities for activating overlooked spaces, talents, and relationships as new resources for ministry, Asset-Mapping events spark valuable new ideas, initiatives, and community partnerships. As newly articulated strengths and resources are unleashed in the community, congregations begin to grow an energized network of supporters—both locally and regionally—thereby strengthening their case for support and unlocking new, previously untapped sources of community funding.

The Asset-Mapping process results in a highly valuable, systematic inventory of a congregation's resources for ministry. At the completion of this service congregations also receive a written report reflecting Partners' prioritized, actionable guidance for maximizing the value and impact of their buildings and other spaces.



## *Step Three: Exploring Space-Sharing Arrangements and Revenue Generating Community-Use as a Tool for Ministry and Fundraising*

The Asset Mapping process also helps a congregation discern the value of their property for mission, community, and potential new uses, including community partnerships and space-sharing arrangements that may yield new streams of rental revenue.

As a part of Asset Mapping—particularly when a congregation's leaders are interested in space-sharing or rental arrangements with other community groups but uncertain of how that idea will be received—Partners staff can facilitate a conversation bringing together clergy, lay leaders, and interested community stakeholders to explore the congregation's level of interest in and readiness to pursue new space-sharing arrangements.

Partners has significant experience facilitating space-sharing matches between client congregations and allied local organizations, including community nonprofits, small businesses, and arts groups, and is well-equipped to

offer customized recommendations and guidance on a wide range of topics such as:

- Pursuing space-sharing partnerships and rental arrangements that fit well with a congregation's mission and identity
- Which underutilized spaces on a church's campus are best suited to space-sharing relationships, and how to effectively repurpose and ready spaces for rental
- Guidance regarding marketing and messaging, including hands-on help with getting the word out to local community groups, small businesses, and potential one-time renters that a church has space available

## Designing New Uses for Congregational Assets

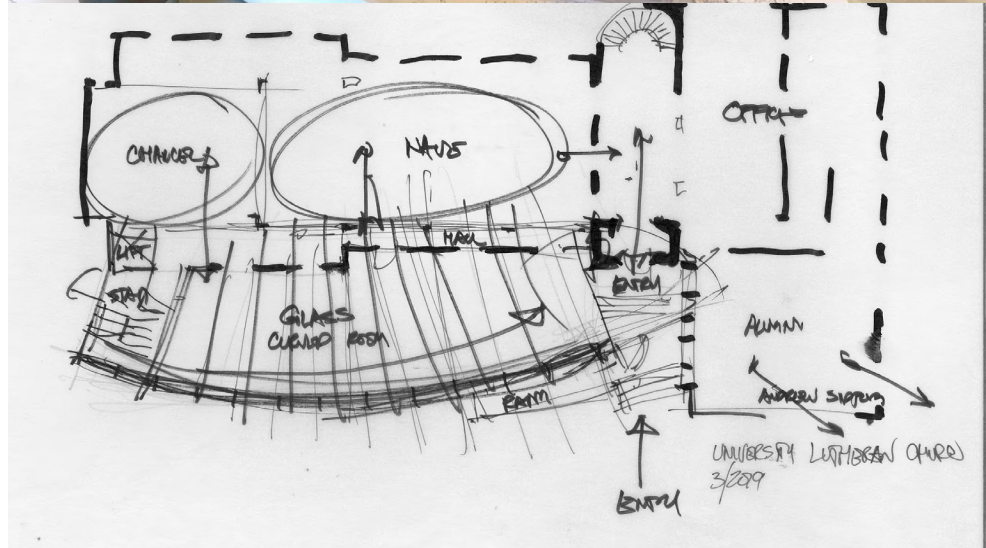
Partners has always played an important role in bringing faith communities together with preservation specialists and designers committed to the flourishing of sacred places. Congregations interested in transforming their spaces for new uses and open to modifying their buildings—while still maintaining their essential character—can choose to add a *Design Charrette* component to their Asset Mapping event.

### Why a Design Charrette?

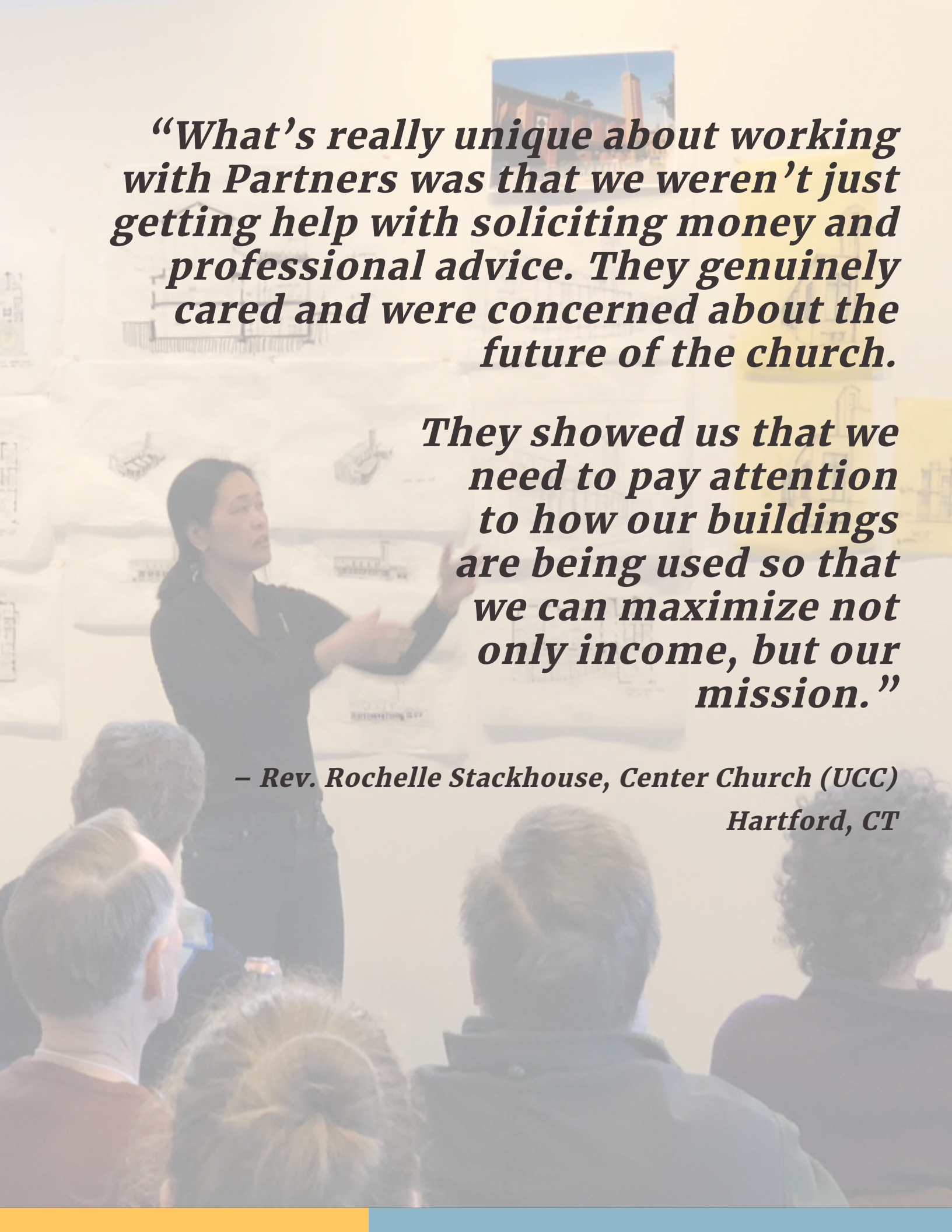
A design charrette event is a valuable way to bring the creativity and skills of architects and designers (typically *pro bono* architects sponsored by the American Institute of Architects) to bear on the challenges faced by churches and synagogues committed to the responsible stewardship of their historic properties who are nevertheless interested in adapting their sacred spaces for new uses, including shared community use.

In a charrette event, groups of designers receive input from congregational and community leaders about their vision and hopes for new ways their buildings can serve their goals. Building on the output of asset mapping and the input of community leaders, civic stakeholders and local residents, the charrette engages them in new, creative ways of thinking about the site.

Participating architects then embark upon an intensive process that quickly generates a range of design suggestions for adapting a congregation's space. The experience generates plans and elevation drawings that help a congregation visualize how its property can function in new ways, linking spaces more effectively, and bringing new programs to underused space.





A woman with dark hair, wearing a dark top, stands and gestures towards a group of people seated in the foreground. The background is filled with various architectural drawings, including floor plans and a photograph of a brick building with a tall chimney. The text is overlaid on the upper portion of the image.

***“What’s really unique about working with Partners was that we weren’t just getting help with soliciting money and professional advice. They genuinely cared and were concerned about the future of the church.***

***They showed us that we need to pay attention to how our buildings are being used so that we can maximize not only income, but our mission.”***

***– Rev. Rochelle Stackhouse, Center Church (UCC)  
Hartford, CT***

## Halo Effect: Assessing a Congregation's Social and Economic Impact

A Halo Study of a church, synagogue, or other house of worship can lay the groundwork for a successful outside capital campaign by convincing new community stakeholders of the value—social, economic, and civic—represented by a congregation's ministries.

Sacred places function as *de facto* community centers, yet often struggle to communicate their economic and social value to civic leaders. That is why Partners developed The Economic Halo Effect of Sacred Places, a tool used to calculate the localized economic impact of a single congregation or group of churches or synagogues.

A Halo assessment strengthens a congregation's case statement for funding and raises enthusiasm among leaders, laying important groundwork for a dynamic and successful capital campaign. By effectively communicating a congregation's value to the wider community, a Halo assessment can make a compelling case for philanthropic and individual donor support of sacred places as engines of neighborhood health and vitality.

Partners has worked with congregations throughout the country to:

- Tell the story of their church's ministry and space in a way that appeals to civic leaders and community stakeholders who don't speak the language of faith
- Communicate the value of a given program (e.g., a food pantry) or program emphasis (e.g., arts programming, a concert series, etc.)
- Bolster annual stewardship campaigns and larger capital fundraising efforts
- Provide data that strengthens grant applications
- Advocate for sacred places in the face of threats such as tax assessments





# Average Annual Economic Halo Value per Congregation

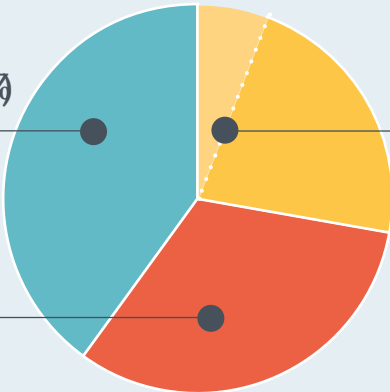
\$ 1,707,249

\$679,511

education and childcare (40%)

\$549,073

direct spending (32%)



\$478,665

catalytic effects on local economy

\$100,296

invisible safety net (6%)

\$375,944

magnet effect, drawing visitors to the neighborhood (22%)

Note: Invisible safety net: 5.9%, recreation space: 0.1% (\$2,425)

Research shows that 87% of the beneficiaries of community programs and events housed in sacred places are not members of the resident religious congregation



13%

Congregation members



87%

Non-member beneficiaries of community programs

## Discovery and Feasibility Studies: The Foundation of Successful Capital Campaigns

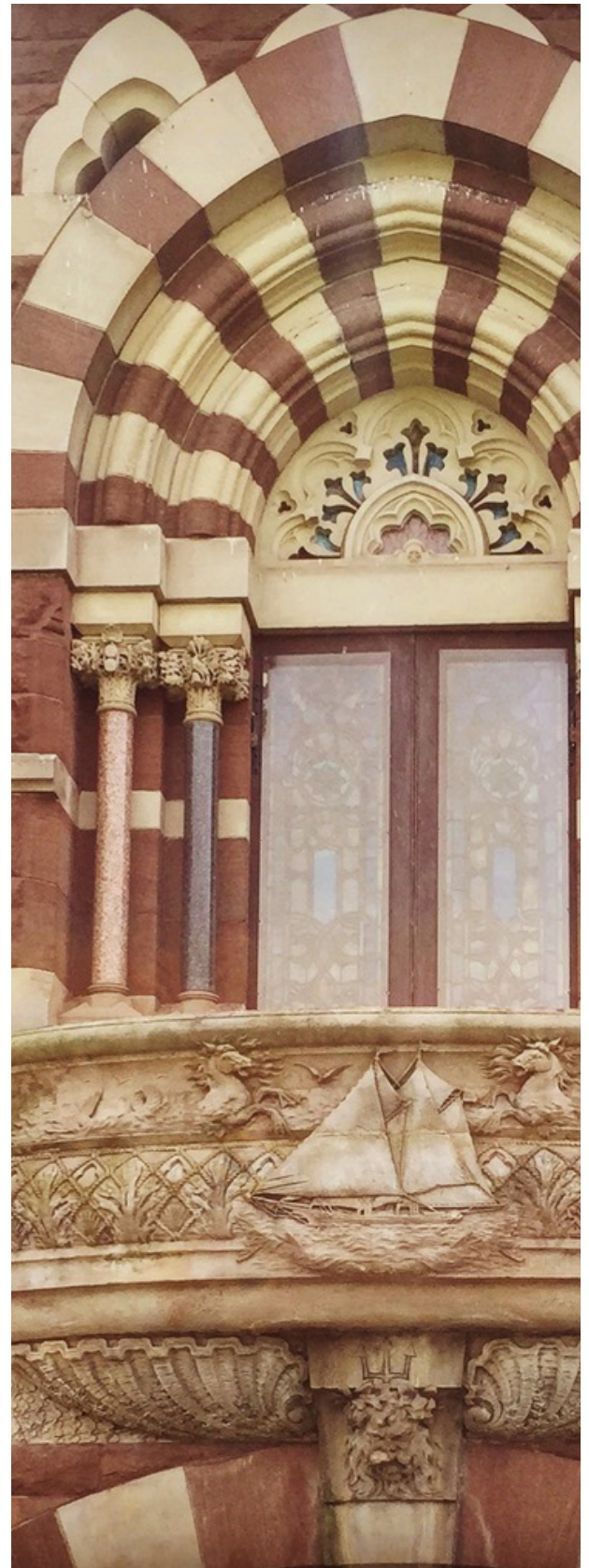
With Partners' support, congregations can engage civic leaders and stakeholders, partner with community institutions, and build a strong case for the public value of older sacred places, leading to successful community-wide fundraising efforts. Following Asset Mapping and other community engagement efforts, Partners' capital campaign services help a congregation take next steps toward their fundraising goals—effectively leveraging the support of external institutions and community donors, and securing new partnerships that ensure the future of older buildings.

### *The Discovery Study: A Tool For Understanding Your Place in the Landscape*

Much the same as how a lawyer might obtain knowledge in a “discovery” phase to strengthen his or her case, Partners' discovery study was developed as a tool for congregations to better understand their role within the wider community and identify assets they can leverage to strengthen their case for funding. Through one-on-one conversations Partners analyzes the community's perception of a congregation and its work, generating valuable insight and recommendations for future fundraising possibilities. This serves as a vital foundation for a subsequent feasibility study and eventual capital campaign.

### *The Feasibility Study: Preparing for Successful Community-Wide Fundraising*

The feasibility study is an essential tool for preparing and accomplishing a successful community-wide capital campaign. The feasibility study process is an opportunity for a congregation to gauge the receptiveness of members and the community to its campaign; refine its case statement based on feedback; and to identify and recruit volunteers, campaign leadership, and major donors; and to identify realistic fundraising goals and timelines.





## *Discovery vs. Feasibility Study*

A discovery study looks outward to analyze the current state of the church or synagogue and its presence in the life of the community, providing key information about the community's perceptions and feelings about the congregation and its building. A feasibility study offers increased focus on the receptiveness and openness of the community and other potential stakeholders to the message of a capital campaign. Whereas a feasibility study focuses on fundraising and related financial questions by providing an assessment of giving capacity to a potential campaign, Partners' discovery study focuses on learning about a church or synagogue's community context. It is often a good first step for congregations that want to complete successful community-wide capital fundraising, but may require initial efforts to understand and engage their community.

## *Capital Campaigns*

Partners also provides comprehensive consulting services to support congregations in preparing for, carrying out, and completing successful capital campaigns. Beginning with prospect research and continuing through campaign evaluation, Partners provides congregations the consultation and support they need to ensure their campaign's success.







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