

OUTLINE OF THE HISTORY OF THE UNITARIAN CAMPUS
FOR A CAMPUS PLANNING WORKSHOP – DECEMBER 4, 2011

1. RELOCATION OF THE UNITARIAN CONGREGATION

- The Church at Elgin and Lewis was too small. RE program occupied several neighbouring houses. In 1961, a Committee on Church Expansion was set up, and in 1964, the Congregation voted to relocate to a larger site.
- The Congregation bought this property from the NCC in about 1965. The NCC had bought most of this land in the 1950's as part of its land assembly for the Ottawa River Parkway, but decided that this piece of land would not be needed for that purpose.
- As was recently documented in "River, Road and Rail", the book of local history that was prepared by the Woodroffe North Community Association, a residential street called Leafloor Street had been built in the 1930's, running across the present church property south to north, from near Richmond and Sherbourne to the Ottawa River. This street, together with about a dozen houses on it, disappeared when the land at its northern end was bought in the 1950's for the Parkway and, the remaining four properties near its Richmond Road end were bought in the 1960's by the City to make way for the planned extension of Sherbourne Avenue to the Parkway.
- Leafloor Street also served as access road to Johnston's Mills, located on the Ottawa River, which had produced lumber around the turn of the twentieth century and later produced other products. The mill was served by a railway spur line running south-west to north-east and passing right over the present site of the church building.
- Immediately to the east of the present church building were three more residential streets, Melbourne, connected to Richmond by Cleary Avenue, and running east-west just north of the railway tracks; Clybourne, running north-south from the west end of Melbourne, just west of Cleary, to the river, and Ardmore running north-south, from the east end of Melbourne to the river.
- At the time the land was bought by the Congregation, it was partly covered by water and thought by many to be a swamp. The church representatives realized it was not swamp and that a culvert had been clogged up. After the land was bought, it was easily drained.
- The congregation moved into the new building in April 1967, after selling the old church and holding its services in Elgin Street Public School for two and a half years. The new building cost about \$450,000.
- From early on, it was recognized that this land was more than the church needed, and that part of it could be used for socially beneficial purposes.
- The road entry to the property was from the West side, using Algonquin Avenue. Electric power came in the same way. Water and sanitary sewers came in from the east, from the former Clybourne Street. The NCC had bought that land and demolished the houses.
- A sizeable part of the land had to be reserved for a planned extension of Sherbourne Road. This prevented construction on much of the western part of the property.
- Originally, a stream flowed from close to our present front steps, through the middle of the present church building, through the play yard, and out to the north. To deal with this water flow, a new ditch and drain pipe were installed around the east side of the church, and another new, shallow ditch was created along the north side of the church building.
- The church building was completed in 1967. It was placed at the north-east corner of the property, with gravelled parking to the south of it. Overflow parking for Sundays was located in the south-west area. The area directly west of the church was grass and trees.

- Before UH was built, there was sometimes wetness in the Now Room in the lower level. Afterwards, the foundations of UH blocked that underground flow of water.
- The rooms along the east side of the Lower Level of the church building were designed to accommodate a Child Care Centre. River Parkway Preschool Centre was started by church members. Eventually it grew to occupy almost the entire Lower Level. In 2007, River Parkway moved into its own new building on the campus. More about that later.
- Inside the building, space was also rented to other socially important institutions. In the 1980's, these included two notable organizations: the first Ottawa office of Amnesty International, in which Rev. Vernon Nichols and his wife Sue were prominent leaders, and the first home of Rideauwood addiction treatment centre.

2. UNITARIAN HOUSE

- Planning for a seniors' residence on the church site began very soon after the new church was built.
- This project was helped by the fact that during the 1970's, the City decided to not proceed with the extension of Sherbourne Road across the church land.
- The residents of Woodroffe North were concerned that a seniors' residence on our site would result in excessive traffic through their neighbourhood.
- As a result, a new entrance to the property was built from Cleary Avenue. This required a three-way exchange of land between the Church, the NCC and the City. The Church gave the NCC some land on the river side of the property and in exchange obtained land on the east side. There was a similar trade of land between the NCC and the City. The church also bought, from the City, some land in the present north-west corner of the property.
- UH was erected south of the church, near the east side of the property. It was built where the church's main parking lot and a storage building had been.
- The land on which UH is built still belongs to the church. It is leased land. At first, the lease was for 50 years, ending in 2033. The UH building was financed by means of a long term, low interest loan supported by CMHC. The rental payment to the church was equal to the amount that CMHC would agree to as the cost of the land, and was all paid at the start of the lease, in 1983. It amounted to \$346,500; based on \$3,300 per apartment.
- The original leased land included not only the area where the UH building stands, but also the quadrangle, the entry road, and land east of UH.
- Unitarian House installed new water lines, sanitary sewer and storm sewers to serve its land. A new electric power line was installed, still from Algonquin Avenue, to transformers in UH, and a new natural gas line was installed via Cleary Avenue. The cost of the entry road was shared between the City (20%), the Church and UH (40% each).
- The Church used about half of the rental payment to pay off its mortgage; and used most of the rest to pay for building new parking lots and installing new services. These new services included new water and sanitary sewer lines to replace the deteriorated old ones. These new sewer and water lines connected with the new lines being built for UH, which entered the property from Richmond Road via Cleary Avenue. The church also built a new electrical connection from the transformer vault in UH. Later on, the church changed to natural gas heating and installed a new gas line, connected to the gas line to UH.
- With a few minor exceptions, UH pays for maintenance of facilities on its leased lands, and the church pays for maintenance costs related to facilities on church lands.

- In the 1990's, UH extended their building, adding an emergency power generator room on the west end and extra rooms at the north east corner. Recently, a canopy was built over the front entrance.

3. PURCHASE OF THE "CPR STRIP" AND EXTENSION OF THE UH LEASE

- Since moving to this new site, the Church had often approached the NCC about possible use of the CPR strip lands for parking or about a Right of Way for a possible second exit. These requests were refused by the NCC which wanted to keep this strip of land intact.
- About 1995, the NCC indicated that they wanted to sell the former CPR Strip. These lands were put on the market. The Strip was zoned the same as the adjoining land on the north side. Parts of the Strip west of the church were sold for residential development; but because the land immediately south of the church land was accessible only via the church land, there were no interested buyers other than the Church itself. The Church was interested but had no money. UH agreed to help finance the purchase of the CPR Strip.
- On July 7, 1998, the church bought the CPR strip land for \$192,570: a real bargain. Immediately, UH leased one third of that area for 49 years, to 2047, for \$127,774. For an additional amount, UH also obtained a 14 year extension, to 2047, of their original lease.
- A condition imposed by the NCC on the sale of the CPR Strip was that the land is to be used for socially beneficial purposes.
- UH built paved parking areas for residents and guests on part of this land. The Church built gravel parking on part of the CPR Strip, including a small area which is part of the UH leased lands.

4. RIVER PARKWAY PRESCHOOL CENTRE (NOW RIVER PARKWAY CHILDREN'S CENTRE)

- After purchasing the CPR Strip, the Church started to think about leasing part of its lands, especially parts of the CPR Strip lands, to other parties for socially beneficial purposes. Proposals were invited, and three were received, from RPPC, a service project proposed by the Rotary Club and an Alzheimer's patient care proposal presented by the Victoria Order of Nurses. The latter two proposals were eventually withdrawn.
- Discussions continued with RPPC who wanted to construct a new, specifically-designed building to house their operations. The new RPPC building was initially planned to be two storeys high. However, after the amount of funding provided by the City of Ottawa was reduced, it was reduced to a single storey. In 2007, a lease was signed for 20 years, with provision for a 10 year extension on terms to be negotiated.
- The lease rent consists of several parts: at the start, payments of \$150,000 in cash plus \$260,000 for a new, larger water line and for extending sewer lines to serve RPPC. Since these water and sewer lines are on church lands, they belong to the Congregation. In addition, rent of \$15,000 per year is payable for each of the last ten years of the lease.
- The leased land includes the area of the building itself plus the play yard and other space to the south and west of the RPPC building, but it includes very little land in front of or to the east of the new building. RPPC is permitted to use parking spaces in front of and near the building even though that space is outside of the leased land.
- RPPC is responsible for sharing in the cost of snow clearing and maintenance of various types of services in accordance with terms set out in the lease.

- A drain pipe was installed to carry rainwater from the RPPC play yard to the Meditation Garden. Nevertheless, since the UH and RPPC buildings have been built, very little water flows over or under the ground, from the south, to the Gardens or to the church building.

5. THE MEDITATION GARDENS

- The Meditation Gardens are now an important feature of the Campus. In 1993, a team assembled by Jack Wright initiated work on the gardens. They designed and built the northern part of the North Meditation Garden.
- A few years later, Renee Devry and others created the southern half of the North Gardens. In 2003, work began on the South Meditation Gardens. Brian's Reste was built about 2005, in honour of Brian Kopke when he retired as Minister.
- In 2010-11, a solar powered water well was constructed which will create a flow of water to feed the pond and provide water for the plants in the garden.
- In 2010, in conjunction with a proposal to establish an area where the ashes of deceased persons could be scattered, the Board passed a motion that the North Gardens are considered to be a permanent feature of the Campus.

6. PARKING: SPACES AVAILABLE AND PARKING REQUIREMENTS

- For Sunday mornings, parking requirements are estimated at 180 spaces for 270-300 people. Except for the Fall Fair or a few exceptional events such as very large funeral services, this is the most we need.
- The church now has available 194 spaces. This includes 48 on the CPR strip. The church and UH have agreed that UH may use 9 spaces on church (not leased) land, while the church may use 10 spaces on the UH part of the CPR strip. In addition, there are 54 spaces for UH. The City requires that we have a combined total of about 143 spaces.
- Any future development of the land will almost inevitably remove some of the present parking spaces, and will thus have to include provision for creating new parking spaces.

7. RELATIONSHIP TO DEVELOPMENTS ALONG RICHMOND ROAD

- The strip of land on Richmond Road and immediately south of our property, as well as the Nokia Restaurant strip mall represents one of the most desirable locations for high rise development in Ottawa. There is a strong possibility of establishing a transit stop near Cleary Avenue. This would further increase the demand for high density development in our vicinity.
- When (NOT "IF") new highrise buildings are built on the north side of Richmond Road south of our lands, they will greatly affect the development potential of our land.
- It is essential that we take steps to assert our plans for the future use of our land.
- It is also essential that we take action to ensure that future developments on our land and on the Richmond Road strip are mutually compatible.
- An example of how compatibility can be improved is the 15 storey Charlesfort condo building, in which the tall building was moved much further to the east, and in which the west part of the lot has a low building. This protects the ability of the Church or UH to make good use of our land.