



# DESIGN INTERVENTION

REVOLUTIONIZING SACRED SPACE

by MEL MCGOWAN





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# FORM FOLLOWS FEAR

Two early memories of church buildings remain etched in my mind. In one, I'm sitting in a centuries-old German cathedral, listening to Latin Mass with strangers. (Actually, I mostly remember sitting and standing at the wrong times.) The imagery, centered on a realistic life-sized crucifix, was foreign and frightening.

In the second I'm "on stage" as an altar boy, still sitting when I should be standing, and receiving dirty looks from the priest each time I place my candles on the wrong side.

A few years later and a continent away I first experienced a modern megachurch campus. I'd been asked to design a 3500-seat sanctuary and Christ-centered community in California and wanted to benchmark a similar facility. After work one day, I pulled off the freeway and wound around to the "compound" entrance. As I pulled up to the gate, a loud squawk-box voice inquired, "CAN I HELP YOU?" I asked to look at the campus. After a brief pause, the disembodied voice asked, "ARE YOU A BROTHER?" After a brief pause of my own I replied with some forced bravado, "Sure, I'm a brother." Soon a golf cart appeared with another "brother" who gave me a guided tour and seemed incredulous anyone would visit the building on a weekday.



Today many church architects follow one of these two paths. Some cling to the *traditional design aesthetic* that a church building must incorporate structural acrobatics, soaring ceilings, and layers of often-obscure or gloomy spiritual imagery.

Others “cracked the nut” of *modern church design* thirty years ago. Like Mr. Brady, the architect father on *The Brady Bunch* who designs nothing but ranch houses, these well-intentioned, hard-working leaders have been rubber-stamping the same “form follows function” single-day-use plans since the ‘70s.

It doesn’t have to be this way.

I cherish one other memory: between my embarrassment in German cathedrals and my inexperience at the local megachurch, I met God personally at a casual lunchtime gathering of Christians on the lawn at my high school. As I sat under the Master-Architect-designed ceiling of tree, sun, and sky, I realized the kids around me thought about God more than one morning a week, and they connected with Him outside an ominous or boring building. I wanted the same thing—horizontal relationships to others and a vertical connection with God.

Church environments can truly facilitate these connections by using concrete, paint, and landscaping to communicate the Gospel in new ways. This “architectural evangelism” still upholds excellence, but replaces intimidating experiences with inviting environments.

And the invitation, of course, is to Jesus.

A Samaritan woman had made too many mistakes. She knew she would never make it to the temple’s Outer Court or through the Inner Court, much less to the Holy of Holies where God dwelled. In fact, she couldn’t even gather water at the village well without seeing the scorn and contempt of her neighbors.

But Jesus didn’t wait for her to feel righteous enough for the temple rituals. Instead, He used a nearby well to offer her living water. In one brief exchange, with one simple analogy, Jesus used a specific place to begin the connection, launch the story, and transform a life.

It’s still happening, from Las Vegas to the killing fields of Cambodia. Churches around the world are staging design interventions: rediscovering Christ-centered community, rethinking sacred space, and revolutionizing ministry.



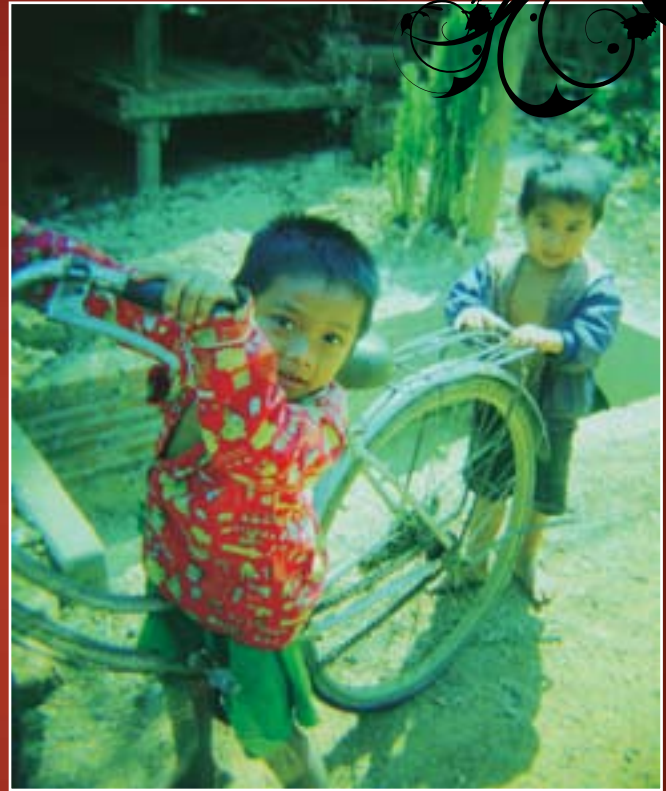
## BATTAMBANG VILLAGE BATTAMBANG, CAMBODIA



Christopher LaPel grew up in the Cambodian Royal Palace (think *The King and I*) as the oldest son of a Royal Brahman priest, and escaped to a refugee camp in Thailand when the Khmer Rouge captured his parents and killed them in a concentration camp.

Christopher later led 150 families from the camp to their current home, a unique Christ-centered village on the edge of Battambang. There, traditional open-air stilt houses surround a village green, dubbed "Harvest Field," and a community house and market stalls promote economic and interpersonal growth.

The village also includes Cambodia Christian Church, the largest congregation in the country; its new chapel integrates elements



of Khmer architecture with French colonial influences to create a uniquely appropriate connection to the Hope Bible Institute nearby. The Institute wraps around a formal garden environment divided into outdoor "rooms" allowing students to experience biblical references through a grapevine arbor walk, olive and palm groves, and a "re-creation" garden of biblical plantings.

During the war, Christopher crossed from hatred to love and built a bridge to the enemy, leading the chief of Khmer Rouge's secret police to Christ. Today, the diagram of Battambang's design also reveals a cross, with bridges between sacred ground and community space, and between God and man.













The "Big Idea" for this authentic Christ-centered community was simple...to mirror God's transformation of this land from the *Killing Fields* to the *Harvest Fields*.

**ROBERT BERGMANN** DIRECTOR OF DESIGN  
VISIONEERING STUDIOS







MAIN  
ENTRY

FIRE IT UP  
FALL 2010



REUNITE IN  
HOMELAND  
FALL 2010

## CENTRAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH LAS VEGAS, NEVADA



Jud Wilhite's drive to share "uncensored grace" with Sin City has reinvented the experience (and doubled the attendance) at this church southeast of Las Vegas.

Although Central's campus initially sported the ever-popular big-box-with-hospital-corridors look, today the church reaches its city with a design solution based on the Samaritan woman's encounter with Jesus at "Jacob's Well." Central's version of the well will serve as an oasis and water source for a "River of Life" running throughout the 55-acre property.

The desert climate also inspired campus elements; the sanctuary and supporting ministry buildings will be recast as "landscape in drag," evoking Anasazi cliffside villages embedded within the canyon walls and mesas, while the building mass forms a "slot canyon" providing shelter and shade.

And the institutional lobby and cafeteria now resemble a Vegas ultra-lounge, where horizontal connections over a cup of water (or coffee) can foster vertical connection to the Creator.





"Though I am a conservative Christian, I will do anything that does not violate the Bible to help people experience God's grace. I knew there would be plenty of desperate, hurting people in the Vegas area. And desperate measures would be needed to show them there is hope for everyone, no matter how broken he or she might be."

**JUD WILHITE** SENIOR PASTOR  
CENTRAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH : LAS VEGAS







# CHRIST'S CHURCH OF THE VALLEY

SAN DIMAS, CALIFORNIA



A wild-man senior pastor, a five-acre site with a multi-useless gymnasium, and a community opposed to church development projects: all the ingredients for success!

Despite its built-in limits, thousands of people gathered at CCV's building each weekend and the church began considering an alternative worship venue in an adjacent fellowship hall to accommodate the crowds.

CCV also approved a master plan to re-create its site as a village "paseo" centered on a modern interpretation of the cross. At its

base, a source fountain becomes a water feature running through the campus; the "river" spills alongside an amphitheatre facing the main road and ends at an outdoor baptismal, symbolizing the ever-present cleansing of Christ's blood.

Today, many worshippers choose the Fireside Café and enjoy the service via video while laughing and learning together at organic groupings of couches, high-back chairs, and coffee tables. Outside, the environment's spiritual metaphors invite guests from every service (and from the once-resistant community) to experience Christ's love.











"We are left with no common realm, no simultaneity.

This has destroyed our kaleidoscopic sense of life  
and created a tremendous need in the general  
population to want to come together and  
experience the restorative energy that is provided  
by a complex communal experience."

JOHN JERDE  
ARCHITECT





# DESIGN INTERVENTION

Every Sunday in America, another ugly church building opens. For this to occur is little more than a miracle.

For example, 80% of church architectural drawings are thrown away because of feasibility and cost-control issues. Unlike any other type of land use, church zones don't exist in most cities. Churches must go through a process of "begging for the forgiveness to exist," since they are taking land out of the city tax-base coffers.

Often these projects are also complicated, multi-use facilities including assembly areas, recreational uses, food preparation, and educational spaces. And although pastors may be called by God to be "fishers of men" and "shepherds of the flock," most don't have advanced degrees in land development and architecture. Therefore, they follow protocol and assemble a volunteer committee which tries to collectively serve as the Project Manager. They may delegate less important tasks, such as interior design, to a "women's decorating subcommittee."

This is simply not how successful projects happen in the real world. Statistics reveal the disconnect: in many cases, either a senior pastor or a building committee chairperson will leave the congregation within a year of the new building's grand opening.

Are bigger buildings worth the potential pitfalls of community opposition, split congregations, pastoral departures, and sacrificial giving campaigns? Most evangelical pastors still say yes, assuming that "if we build it, they will come." But according to Barna Research, between 1993 and 2000 the dollars spent on church construction increased by 100%. During the same timeframe the US population increased by 40%, while US church attendance *decreased* 40%. A statistician would call that a directly inverse correlation, while a businessman would call it an unacceptable ROI.

America is increasingly becoming a postmodern, post-Christian nation, and church architects who drop fiberglass steeples in front of converted Wal-Marts are part of the problem.

Without rethinking biblical definitions of authentic church and community, they continue to endorse the same generic solutions across the country.

However, generic is irrelevant—and not always cheaper. Instead of throwing more money at less effective buildings reaching fewer people, a design intervention considers the surrounding culture, unique identity, DNA, and purpose of the individual ministry.

At the same time, focusing on one major theme as a conceptual overlay avoids vanilla, helps with decision-making, reaches not-yet-Christians and even saves money.

Talk about a miracle.



ROCKHARBOR





## 4 ROCK HARBOR COSTA MESA, CALIFORNIA



What started as a suburban young-adult ministry has become one of the fastest-growing Gen X/Y churches in the country. Rather than remaining in the 'burbs, Rock Harbor found its first home in an industrial area of blue-collar Costa Mesa and then expanded to the Shark Club, a leading nightclub. (Down the street, the South Bristol Entertainment, Culture, & Arts, or "SoBeCa" District, is emerging around The LAB Anti-mall and The Camp, two successful retail experiments providing alternatives to Orange County plasticity.)

Visioneering associate architect Tony Massaro was handed the design keys while serving as an elder at Rock Harbor, and the re-created warehouse space incorporates the creativity of both ministries. Visitors enter through an outdoor room displaying

environmental art and doubling as a shaded gathering space. Stained concrete extends from this room to the central area, a "nave"-like gallery featuring changing works by members. Amorphous spaces layered with raw lumber trusses, galvanized metal panels, iron grillwork, and outdoor furniture provide layers and textures, while barn doors roll open to allow the "black box" stage to blur into the larger gathering space.

Stewardship and creativity—values frequently held in a dichotomous relationship—are both communicated here throughout the environment. By clearly recycling and reusing materials and finishes normally considered unsuitable for sacred space, social and environmental values are linked to the spiritual one of vibrant, Christian community.



"We tried to use similar materials found in the deconstructivist  
*Anti-mall* in a balanced way to reinforce that we serve a God  
of order."

**\_TONY MASSARO** ELDER – ROCK HARBOR  
ASSOCIATE ARCHITECT





## CANDLEWALK CORONA, CALIFORNIA



Both the mission and the mission field of Crossroads Christian Church led to the Candlewalk "big idea." Corona is more than a brand of beer; in Spanish it means "a concentric circle of light surrounding a luminous body." This definition inspired the vision for a postmodern piazza, a Mediterranean "city on a hill," and a church radiating Light to its community.

Rather than appearing as a massive structure, the campus presents a village-like composition of towers, metallic cornices, and portals. Buildings clad in parapets, façade walls, bamboo and a rich color palette evoke a hill town with contemporary, bold forms.

The master plan includes "cradle to grave" lifestyle components including educational opportunities from preschool to "Executive MBA-styled" seminary programs, and integrates mixed uses such as retail, food and beverage, and senior housing.

An old nursery space became the "Third Place Café," where palm tree "columns" enclose a dining terrace featuring outdoor



firepits, festival lights, and space heaters/misters. Diners enjoy a city lights view while resting on teak-appearing patio furniture (made of recycled plastic) and Arizona sandstone boulders which double as sculpture. A river of colored glass weaves throughout the campus and children play near a gentle waterfall and interactive pop jet fountains.

Light reflectors on the auditorium's curved façade cast shimmers of light, and digitally-printed "lifestyle graphics" on an interim expansion wall communicate to thousands of cars passing by. The 3200-seat worship center, also known as "Stage 1 @ Candlewalk," not only facilitates life-changing ministry but also functions as a concert venue and community outreach tool on Friday and Saturday evenings. Recent Candlewalk concerts include Lonestar, SheDaisy, Olivia Newton-John, and Delirious.

In the middle of it all, a modern campanile (and cell tower) soars above the Circle of Light piazza, topped by a lit cross shining brightly across Corona.











A family came to us when they were on the verge of divorce and it seemed they were being overwhelmed with problems. They were not sure where to turn. Driving by Crossroads, the campus seemed so welcoming--they said it seemed so alive. Even before their first Sunday, they sat in the parking lot and even walked on the grounds of the campus. By the time Sunday came, they already felt at home and yet were filled with anticipation. It only took a couple of weeks for them both to make decisions for Christ. This has happened many times. The words Architectural Evangelism are true.

**CHUCK BOOHER SENIOR PASTOR  
CROSSROADS CHRISTIAN CHURCH**

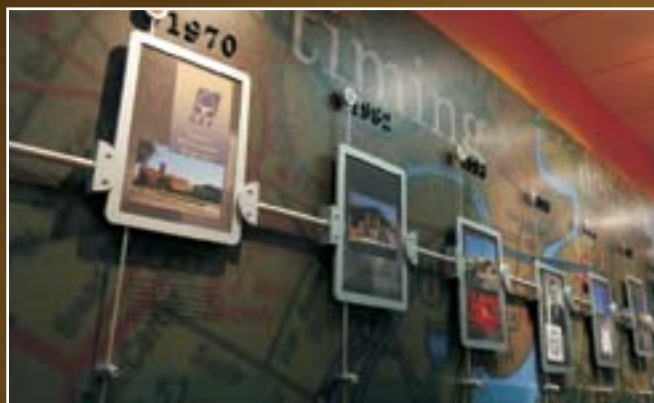


church multiplication  
vibrant communities  
building for ministry  
stewardship  
architectural evangelism





# 6 PROVISION MINISTRY GROUP IRVINE, CALIFORNIA



Tasked with extending this ministry family's newly-created brand into a sequence of spatial experiences and inspired by Provision's collective mission to "develop Christ-centered community," we reconceived their newly-leased insurance offices as a "city-in-a-box."

Rather than a traditional office lobby, the Town Square serves as a coffee bar, lounge, ministry showcase, worship space, financial services center, and conference pre-function area. Main Street links a collection of "neighborhoods" housing the mix of ministries and departments; Visioneering and marketing live in "Soho" while bankers and accountants share the Financial District.

Adjacent team rooms replaced some individual offices while providing private spaces for team collaboration, and modular furniture and clear perimeters maximize California sunshine and increase community across workgroup areas.

Best of all, the team-building strategies in this team building don't add costs; alternative place-making options like digital graphics, multi-media, and environmental design cues kept the tenant improvement costs one-third less than a traditional (bland) corporate space.



Because Provision is a unique collection of ministries, we needed a space that would reinforce our unity of purpose in the face of great functional diversity. What Visioneering did in 2D has translated into a remarkable 3D space that shouts out our new brand.

LARRY WINGER CEO  
PROVISION MINISTRY GROUP









# MOONING THE COMMUNITY

Since World War II, the fine line between sacred and secular spaces has become an almost impermeable boundary.

Modernist architects and urbanists preached “form follows function” while dividing communities into different uses. City planning devolved as land zones evolved and organized areas into industrial, commercial, recreational, and residential categories linked by highways.

The intent was intuitive: after all, who wants to live next to a slaughterhouse? However, the unintended outcome is today’s tangle of commercial strips, homogeneous malls, and suburban sprawl—with global warming and social isolation thrown in as a bonus.

This system also adds levels of difficulty to the already-challenging process of designing a church building. Property owners with vacant lots to sell fear devaluation and land use conflicts with church zoning. Many churches settle for hidden locations in industrial parks or settle in the boondocks after struggling through a conditional use permit.

And church architects must choose from two equally insipid site plan options: “Moon” the community by placing the building’s backside facing the closest intersection with its front doors

opening onto parking lots, or set the building *at* the back side of the property, strip-mall style, with a parking ocean separating the community from the church.

If you accept the Modernist form follows function dogma, the contemporary church building is a machine for worship. This tidy perspective finds either of these two options acceptable and actually dovetails nicely with a numbers-driven church focused on parking x number of cars, seating y number of bodies, and delivering an effective product for a few hours each weekend.

Even better, the machine can be easily replicated; once a church comes off the assembly line, it should work just as well in Anchorage as it does in Orlando.

Unfortunately, form follows function isn't always functional. Mall developers realized that replicating the same vanilla centers with the same blank exterior walls and identical tenant mix may not be their most effective strategy, and architects are realizing churches can't be mass-produced.

Instead, they're finding success by responding to each church's individual community context, and they're learning an alternative paradigm: form follows fiction.

This idea is less a new trend and more a rediscovery of the timeless truths intrinsic to great environments throughout history—places that communicate, tell stories, and present sequences of rich, immersive experiences rather than simple functional diagrams.

For example, the old Roman basilicas (shopping malls) included transepts with cross symbols and stained glass windows which served as visual Bibles for the illiterate masses and filled the spaces with symbolism and narrative.

Today's churches can also tell tales by choosing “big ideas”—based on their unique culture and identity—over random themes. The resulting storyboards then become a design foundation for branding, architecture, site planning, interiors, and the space between buildings.

These strategies can even help churches cross that line between sacred and secular...once in a blue moon.

## 7 THE CROSSING CLARK COUNTY, NEVADA



The Crossing was comfortable with homelessness. Like many church plants, it moved to new venues with each phase of growth and viewed each gathering as the next step. Its leaders believed this experience of journeying together was key to the church DNA—and feared a feeling of having “arrived” could significantly shift their culture.

The Israelites’ journey through the wilderness became a theme for the congregation’s first building. Fabric, pre-engineered metal “sheds,” and adobe-like exteriors created an “architecture of impermanence,” and a portal—reading, “The Journey Begins at The Crossing”—harkened back to the city gates of biblical times.

Other parts of the campus incorporate additional Old Testament Scripture; verses from Isaiah 35 describing God’s

promise to bring life in the desert led to a fabric focal tower as well as the I:35 Café.

Future development focuses on a Court of Pillars inspired by God’s visible presence with His people; during the day, eaves extending from the worship center will emit a cloud-like mist and at night structural pillars will double as torches, creating encircling columns of fire to light the desert “encampment.”

On opening day, the congregation marched across a dry desert wash and piled stones on the project’s border, their pilgrimage to a new home echoing the crossing of God’s people so many years ago.









"The journey begins at the crossing." Thousands of people walk under those words every week. It has become the metaphor for people who are taking that first step in a relationship with God. After seeing some of Visioneering's early projects, we began to dream of building a campus that would become a destination place not only for followers of Jesus, but also for those who were far from God; a place where people would walk onto our campus and be able to tell what kind of church we were just by the architecture, the images, and the experience. Our partnership with Visioneering far exceeded our hopes and dreams of what a campus design could accomplish. We are very grateful.

SHANE PHILIP SENIOR PASTOR  
THE CROSSING









## CENTRAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH BELOIT, WISCONSIN



If you miss the I-90 exit for CCC, your next stop will be the Beloit Casino Project, a multiplex featuring convention center space, restaurants, and even a year-round water park. (Yes. In Wisconsin.)

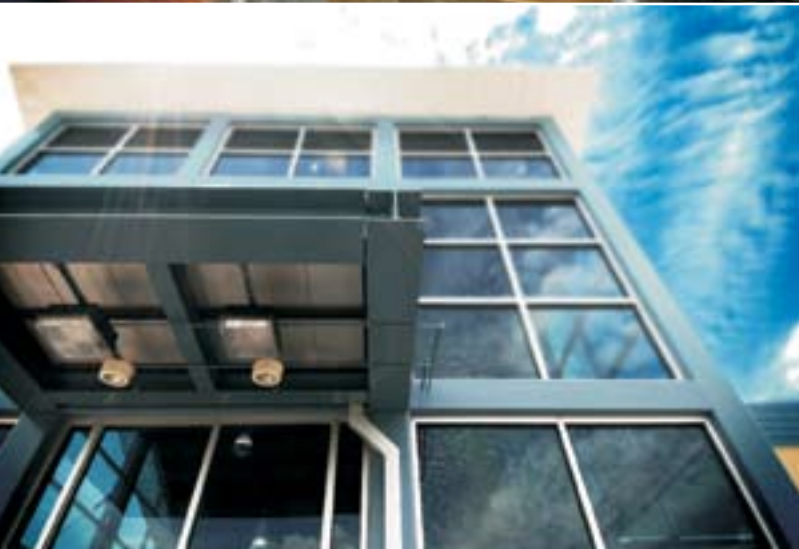
Although some Central members initially worried about the casino's impact, the church's focus on restoration has proven more influential than the nearby gaming tables—even in this economically depressed rustbelt.

In recognition of Beloit's proud heritage as a manufacturing center—and with respect for hundreds of local families out of work—Visioneering developed an industrial theme for the new campus. Inside the factory-style buildings, wayfinding signs include

subtle graphics of water towers and smokestacks. Children attend classes in the Creation Station, Kidzworks Light Factory, or Power Plant while their parents worship in the 1400-seat "Dream Center," an auditorium modeled on professional Chicago theaters and eventually expandable to double its current size.

And the centrally-located "Restoration Square" both reflects and serves as counterpoint to the surrounding landscape.

So make a U-turn if you miss exit 185, and park anywhere you find a spot—enclosed walkways allow you to reach every area of the church from every entrance. (Because unlike those casino folks, our team from California thinks Wisconsin gets cold.)



While the casino down the street chooses  
Deconstructivist architecture, broken lives are being  
re-constructed in this place of restoration. In a rustbelt  
of industrial plants and factories, God is now the  
source of power and light for the region.

**\_ROBERT BERGMANN** DIRECTOR OF DESIGN  
VISIONEERING STUDIOS









Rather than hiring a church architect, Canyon Ridge leaders originally worked with commercial firms to develop a campus intentionally devoid of religious symbolism. The resulting unadorned concrete block and tilt-concrete structures created a high school campus look that was unrelated to the surrounding community, and open areas between structures remained windswept and unshaded.

Interactive workshops aligned the church's mission, brand, programming, and master plan around a PATH concept. The family ministries complex became "Base Camp," a way station of preparation for youth climbing through life. Props, scenic murals, and a second-story "escape hatch" leading to a desert grotto

playground build the theme, while age-appropriate zones facilitate large-group gatherings and breakouts.

The challenge of doubling the worship center's seating capacity while mitigating its mass led to a new balcony built in previously-unused air space above the existing seating. Curved concrete became canyon walls to create a filtered shade canopy for the walkway below.

Today the church reinforces its brand through web, print, and environmental strategies, extending the gospel message to cross the path of not-yet-Christians in Las Vegas.

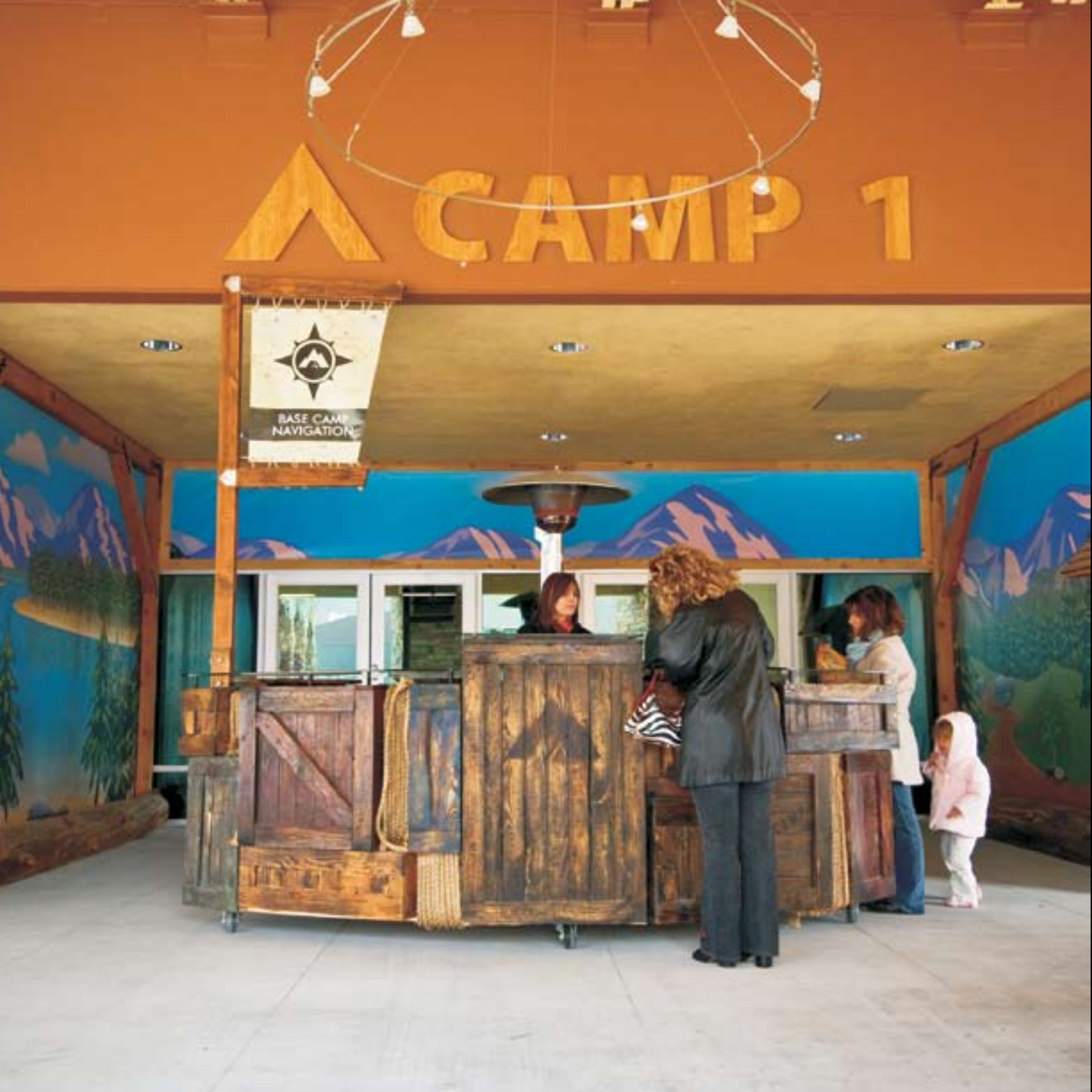




# ^ CAMP 1



BASE CAMP  
NAVIGATION





"As a base camp is a key part to a climbers successful journey up a mountain, Base Camp children's ministry is the last opportunity we have to prepare and equip our children for the ascent and the journey of life."

**PETER MCGOWAN** PRESIDENT  
PLAINJOE STUDIOS





# THE GREEN WAVE

Wal-Mart, the world's largest retailer, recently placed an ad in the *New York Times* stating, "every company has a responsibility to reduce greenhouse gases as quickly as possible." Wal-Mart recently began green retrofits of hundreds of older buildings and is incorporating wind turbines, wildflower meadows, and many other techniques in new stores.

They are not alone. In fact, many of the world's five hundred largest corporations want to build and occupy real estate reflecting environmental care and sustainability.

Three key reasons include market demand, financial return, and corporate responsibility. It may require a little Christian-ese, but churches should consider parallel motives for going green.

## MARKET DEMAND / CULTURAL RELEVANCE

Years ago corporations realized customers frustrated by pollution, sprawl, and traffic were open to marketing messages conveying some level of environmental responsibility. For example, hotels found they could avoid replacing and laundering towels daily by mentioning reduced water consumption and chemical use.

More recently, The National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education has indicated homebuyers will pay a premium of 16% to live in a "New Urbanist" community which preserves open space by increasing density and decreasing house/lot size.

As the debate on global warming shifts from "if" to "how fast," a staid politician has become a rock star (Al Gore) and rock

stars have dabbled in politics (Bono, among others—U2 concerts combine rock and roll, church, awareness of the AIDS crisis in Africa, and Greenpeace calls to action).

Because environmentalism has been identified with both the New Age Movement and the liberal left, evangelicals tend to respond with suspicion, ambivalence, or both. The false dichotomy that environmental concern = liberal and increased Alaskan drilling = moral majority widened the gap between mainstream culture and Christians even more. We may be losing evangelistic opportunities by placing yet another unnecessary barrier between culture and Christ. Pursuit of sustainable church design not only helps the planet, it lends credibility to the Christian message.

## FINANCIAL RETURN / STEWARDSHIP

Don't believe the greenstreaming of corporate America is purely altruistic—these strategies often mean decreased operating costs (and therefore increased financial return).

For instance, site selection which considers locational attributes, such as mixed-use sites sharing parking among various users with different demands, can reduce a project's upfront and long-term costs.

Other strategies also reduce expenses. Beginning the project design with an analysis of the "environmental infrastructure" (topography, drainage, natural features, wind and sun patterns) can minimize costs related to earthwork, storm drain capacity, and landscape materials. Site planning and building orientation,

for example, can lessen the creation of heat islands, take advantage of natural ventilation, or minimize the façade's exposure to summer sun.

In addition, effective landscape architecture can limit heat absorption, AC requirements and construction costs, as well as long-term energy and water consumption. Architectural strategies like "green roofs" can pay for themselves by insulating the building as well as absorbing rain, reducing runoff, and filtering pollutants. Exterior building design elements, from windows to wind chimneys, can mitigate extremes in temperature and support natural ventilation. And because artificial lighting can represent 25% of a building's direct energy consumption, automatic motion and daylight sensors noticeably reduce bills.

Even the initial environmental investment can be more economical—green building technologies, materials, and furnishings like natural fiber and recycled carpeting, Forest Stewardship Council-certified wood products, toxin-free natural insulation, and furnishings with recycled content are all comparably priced to their standard counterparts. Some utilities and governmental agencies also provide incentive, grant, and rebate programs.

For too long, the church has incorrectly defined *stewardship* as spending as few dollars as possible, particularly in regards to construction costs. "Building for the Kingdom" has meant sacrificing creativity for predictability and life-cycle costs for up-front costs. A new definition creates long-term value through wise spending—and always working in concert with God's creation.

## CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY / OBEDIENCE

Jim Rouse, one of the nation's most respected community and mall developers, once said we need to be "lifted up to the bigger view of communities as gardens in which we are growing people and a civilization." Wal-Mart CEO Lee Scott recently stated that "growing in more sustainable ways positively serves every stakeholder in our company." Whether through increased regulatory coercion, political pressure, or consumer demand, corporate America is increasingly responding to calls for environmental responsibility. Corporate ethics have "grown up" to encompass more than just quarterly profits.

In contrast, many believe the Judeo-Christian God who gave humans dominion over the earth also authorized a "rape and pillage" view of the land. But God never gave up ownership of His creation, and scripture calls man to be a caretaker.

Leviticus 25 gives the Israelites careful instructions in the sustainable care of their property. In Isaiah 5, God warns those who unjustly (yet legally) misuse the land. Job 38 and Psalm 104 reveal God's continuing care for his creation. And in Matthew, Jesus reminds us how much the Father cares for even the smallest of sparrows.

If decisions today affect God's creation tomorrow, our love for God should inform our actions beyond immediate goals. If Wal-mart has a responsibility, Christ-followers certainly do.





# 10 BEGORO VILLAGE BEGORO, GHANA



In 2001, the Austrian government built a first-class, state of the art, and completely inappropriate hospital in Begoro. From its design to its construction, the building is foreign to the locals and remains a blight in the community.

On a plateau forested with walnut trees, a new mission center looks down to the hospital—and looks completely different.

Open-air lanais, oriented at forty-five-degree angles for maximum privacy, will house volunteer doctors, nurses, and missionaries who staff the hospital year-round. A courtyard hosts public assemblies and festivals, a rehabilitation center works with the disabled, and the library and lecture hall promote education.

Just as regional villages inspired the design, regional needs drove the logistics. The roof enables rainwater collection and filtration while donated solar panels capture the plentiful African sunlight and help the center generate its own power. Sustainable materials enhance quality, and an investment in training local young people resulted in their acquisition of new job skills while building each room.

Speaking of investments, the building's completion means that beautiful Austrian hospital will finally be used—which is definitely better stewardship of the land.



# 11 MARINERS CHURCH IRVINE, CALIFORNIA



Although a series of God stories helped Mariners score forty acres of prime real estate between Newport Beach's coastal foothills and the nation's largest planned community, the campus's office park look failed to communicate relevant ministry to its Orange County neighbors.

A review of the region's history and natural systems led to non-architectural place-making solutions. Instead of unpainted concrete structures and nonexistent landscaping, an urban>suburban>coastal sage>beach>ocean journey now guides the experience.

A new urban terrace with umbrella-shaded tables encircles the Global Café and Bookstore and draws diners outside. Nearby, a suburban garden park wraps around a central water feature,



and Visioneering's design competition-winning Arts & Crafts-inspired chapel provides a visual anchor. A coastal sage zone includes boardwalks over stylized native planting plots and beach volleyball areas.

Younger worshipers enjoy the "Port Mariners Kidzone" featuring whimsical representations of Paul's shipwreck and Jonah's fish jutting up between recycled-rubber ocean waves. And a youth ministry complex resembling a Newport boathouse provides loft-like "hang space" with plenty of natural light.

God helped Mariners find its land; incorporating the property's unique features into the script helps this church tell the story to a new generation.











"Students in today's culture are at best tolerated, and at worst, despised. Even further from their reality is a place where they can be celebrated and cherished, feel secure, be authentic and develop meaningful relationships."

**\_JEFF MAGUIRE PASTOR**  
STUDENT MINISTRIES - MARINERS CHURCH







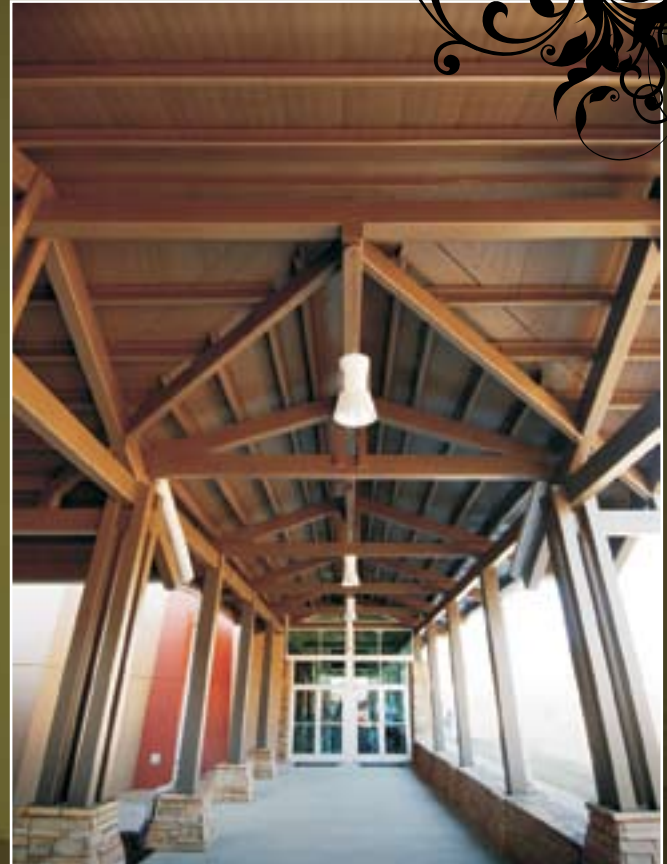


## HERITAGE CHRISTIAN CHURCH PEACHTREE CITY, GEORGIA



Heritage's first architect designed their initial phase without visiting the site, and his in-a-vacuum plans successfully "mooned" the community and came back to bite him in the...well, you know.

Instead of the minor topographical depression and water retention solution he saw on blueprints, Heritage's property actually included a beautiful lake surrounded by a lush pine forest. Although phase one ignored this section of the property and developed a parking lot to separate it from buildings, the area and its Creator still spoke to church members. Senior citizens



created an ad-hoc RV park and campground on one side of the lake, volunteers set up a friendship pavilion, and several members contributed a cross and sacred pile of stones.

Today the Christ-centered community is re-centered near the water. The church worships in a simple pre-engineered structure detailed with elements inspired by Georgia State Park lodges, and a glass, stone, and wood gallery guides foot traffic along the water's edge. God easily handles the wow factor, and the congregation enjoys closer connection to the Master Architect.





"Sympathy for context is by no means an automatic response. We have all confronted situations which require dramatic intervention, just as we have discovered those which call forth a profound regard for continuity."

**CRAIG HODGETTS**  
ARCHITECT









# FORM FOLLOWS FAITH

When entomologists study ant colonies or bee hives, they notice similarities among each species' behavior. Sociologists studying humans also discover patterns in our creating and connecting.

One recurring motif is our tendency to live in three realms defined by physical and social relationships. The family unit (nuclear or extended) and its shared home defines the *First Place*. The *Second Place* is the location one pays for, or prepares to pay for, the First Place—in other words, the workplace or school.

In every age, people have created an additional option—the *Third Place*.

The Greek agora stands out as an early example of the Third Place in Western history. The agora essentially functioned as a community living room where people “did life together.” On one side, merchants set up shop in the marketplace stalls; within shouting distance (sometimes literally) Greek citizens experienced

the birthplace of democracy and Western philosophy in another area devoted to public discourse.

The Greeks also located their temples and religious monuments near the agora. In fact, sacred space has almost always anchored community space: from the Roman Forum to Italian piazzas, from Spanish plazas to New England village greens and Midwestern town squares, the Third Place has routinely included commerce, community, and connection to the deity of choice.

Today, developers recognize the pent-up market demand for these Third Places. With Starbucks, *Truman Show*-styled housing developments, and even the shopping mall's reinvention as a lifestyle retail center, the marketplace has tried to meet our culture's hunger for community.

However, many secular attempts to provide a place where "everybody knows your name" fail to quench the real thirst.

During my tenure at the Walt Disney Company, we based Downtown Disney's layout on a European hill town with meandering streets expanding, contracting, and reaching an experiential climax at a central gathering place. However, where an actual town would have devoted this space to a cathedral, we replaced the sacred "anchor tenant" with entertainment and commercially-oriented buildings.

We tried to fill our master plan's God-shaped hole with the same things many people use to fill theirs.

Although today's urban sprawl no longer fits the tidy 1-2-3 model, church done well still has the potential to redefine the Third Place and provide authentic community. Across the country maverick pastors and emerging leaders are once again leading efforts to "do life together" with seven-days-a-week ministry and an external focus. These community-building efforts are resulting in community buildings—and saving spaces for the lost.





## WEST RIDGE COMMUNITY CHURCH ELGIN, ILLINOIS



When the West Ridge team began brainstorming about new facilities, Pastor Darren Sloniger identified Chicago's nightclubs as his own "third place." Undaunted by the unorthodox comment and inspired by Sloniger's vision to attract "non-church" people, Visioneering worked with the team to design a master plan including luxury townhomes, commercial development, and a House of Blues-style worship venue: The Lightclub.

The club's piano-shaped lounge space, candles, and velvet drapery create a casual, intimate environment offering live music throughout the week. A community studio invites artistic expression in music, visual art, and dance.

The Encounter Café adjoins the club and enjoys a prime street-front location to encourage drop-in visits from the community. A Greek family (who have all become Christians since opening the restaurant) provide homemade meals and good coffee.

And on Sunday mornings West Ridge shares the gospel, and maybe some bluegrass or rock music, with hundreds of non-church people.









If the biggest barrier is getting people who don't know God to just take that first step into church...Architectural Evangelism is what blows that barrier to smithereens and makes coming to church for the first time almost irresistible. Everyone wants to explore their faith and find their way to God, they just need a place where they feel safe--a place so compelling that their curiosity drives them to consider..."What if there really is a church where I can experience acceptance and grace...what if this is the place?"

**DARREN SLONIGER** SENIOR PASTOR  
WEST RIDGE COMMUNITY CHURCH









CCV originally planned to be a "church without walls"—unlike many church plants they never pursued a permanent building for fear the bricks and mortar would slow down their ministry.

When they finally decided to build, their 110-acre property included fabric tents, disconnected stucco buildings, recreation fields, and parking lots. The weekend experience involved trekking through soaring desert temperatures, while hills hid the development from surrounding roads.

Time for a paradigm shift: the revised master plan now wraps around its striking natural landforms and includes two pedestrian-scaled multi-venue campuses, each with its own children's ministry area.

At the west campus a desert "wadi" (hidden valley) surrounds the worship center and youth area. Between the buildings, a

"Dig Site" adventure playground invites kids to enter ministry environments by climbing through scaffolding, nets, and temple ruins or exploring the serpentine "Caves of Qumran."

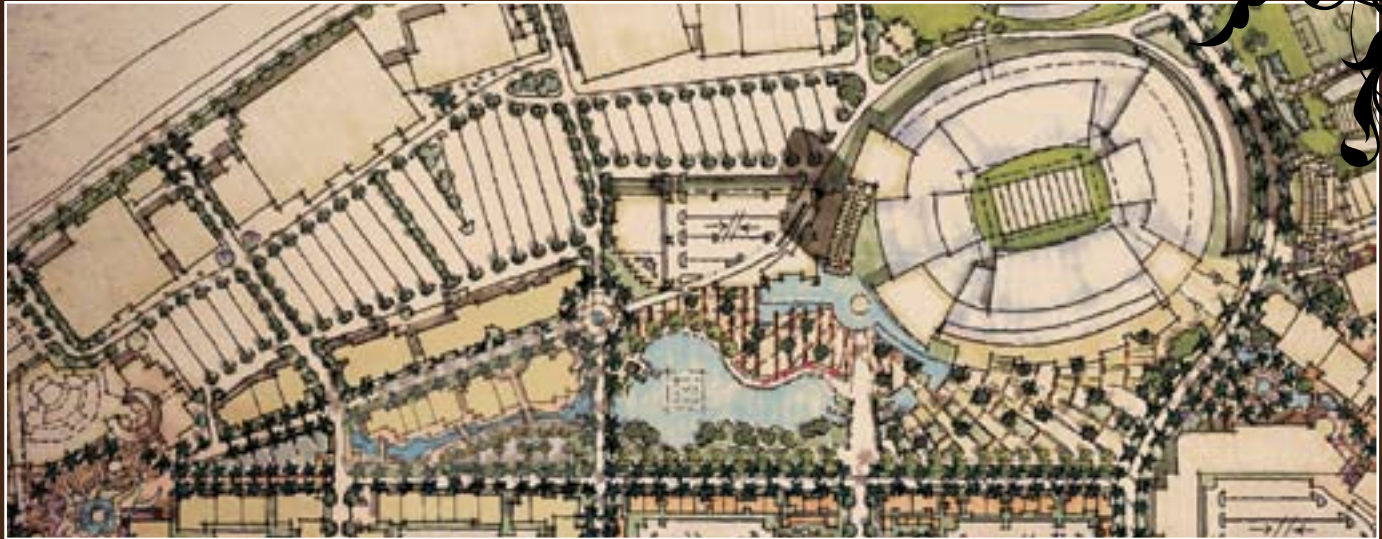
Teens and young adults gather in a venue inspired by the textures, patina, and eclectic graphic art of a roadside juke joint. Tapered desert stone columns visually connect to the worship center, and palm fronds and canopies mitigate the relentless sun.

Meanwhile, the "East Village" will be rezoned as a mixed-use lifestyle retail district. The area includes dining terraces and aqueduct water features, with administration buildings creating a smooth land-use transition.

Now CCV's buildings actually unleash potential rather than limit ministry options. Seems a church might need a few walls after all—especially in the desert.



# 15 ANGELES FIELDS LYNWOOD, CALIFORNIA



Los Angeles models suburban sprawl for the rest of the world. Ironically, while Disneyland, Wal-Mart, and McDonalds (and their car-oriented culture) are exported globally, Americans are becoming increasingly disillusioned with the environmental, social, and economic costs of their commutes and "garagescapes." At the same time, statistics are changing; the "Married with Children" group which developers (and many suburban megachurches) have targeted now represents only 25% of households.

In response to the dissatisfaction and the demographics, a new postmodern urbanism is evolving in Los Angeles. Garden cities like Pasadena and Beverly Hills, reminiscent of L.A.'s "golden age," are maturing into urbane mixed-use areas within the larger sprawlscape. Los Angeles is promoting this development with a re-investment in mass transit—the city previously tore out its urban rail system, the most extensive in the world, to accommodate the car.

Near the intersection of two of these new light rail lines (and two freeways), Angeles Fields is an ambitious effort to create a sustainable, integrated community at the triangulation point of downtown L.A., the port of Los Angeles, and LAX. In this

regeneration of a gang-ridden neighborhood, an NFL stadium and several "districts" will surround a superb green civic space.


The arena will share a green-roofed parking structure with a visionary "Field of Dreams" youth sports complex. The celebrity-endorsed facility will feature views into the stadium and will sit next to a Sportstown district filled with 750,000 square feet of entertainment and retail, two hotel towers, a conference center, and residential units all within a five-minute walk of the transit station. Another 750,000 square feet of retail in the Marketplace will be oriented to maximize freeway visibility.

At the arena entrance, a Celebration Plaza transitions into the Angeles Fields open space and its lake. Las Ramblas, the most integrated mixed-use district, draws inspiration from great cities like Barcelona, and the Latin Quarter provides a library and community services center surrounding a European-styled plaza.

And at the heart of the development we come full circle with Visioneering's design of a 3500-seat church and performing arts center, reclaiming a central location for a sacred Third Place.







In Exodus, God gave his people complete instructions for designing and building a tabernacle. From specifying the colors of linen to the dimensions of each altar, God cared about the details of that environment and His connection to the people inside. God still seeks relationship with his creation, and our gathering places can still reflect it—if we'll consider a Design Intervention.

From the Old Testament temple to today's most innovative buildings, churches create effective environments by using their unique story to share *The Story*. *Design Intervention* is a global journey through this revolution in sacred space.

"Mel has a ton of vision and passion for the creation of sacred space. He will stretch your mind and your heart."

—JOHN ORTBERG PASTOR AND AUTHOR  
MENELO PARK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

"Mel McGowan and the team at Visioneering Studios are some of the most creative people on the planet when it comes to the spaces in which we live and work. Through their commitment, innovation, and teamwork they are transforming the architectural landscape of the 21st Century and making a real difference in people's lives. Want proof? Check out *Design Intervention* and be inspired!"

—JUD WILHITE SENIOR PASTOR  
CENTRAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH : LAS VEGAS