



July 16, 2015

Bethesda GGT Community Café Report

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The meeting was planned after an article was published in the Washington Post on Sunday, June 21, 2015. Barry Lemley and Dave Lambert were the presenters at the “Bethesda GGT Community Café Feasibility Discussion”. Graceful Growing Together (GGT) is the community outreach arm of Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church (CELC) in Bethesda, Maryland. As can be seen by the timeline on the first page of the attached handout, CELC was founded in 1934 and established GGT in 1999. GGT became a separate 501(c)(3) nonprofit in 2008, wholly owned by CELC but having its own 13-member Board of Directors.

Lemley presented slides 1-15; Lambert discussed his role as Director of the GGT Culinary Arts Initiative and Lemley concluded with slides 16-18. Questions and discussion were encouraged throughout the presentation.

For the last 10-years CELC and GGT have been working to redevelop their 2.2 acre downtown Bethesda property. It currently consists of a sanctuary, education wing, parking lot and 4 adjacent houses. The entire property is planned for demolition in late 2016 with occupancy of the new 7-level 64,000 sq. ft. Community Center and Church Building (CCCB) expected in early 2019. Half of the current property is under contract to sell to Bush Construction Company to erect and market 107 condominiums that will be the economic engine for the Church and Community Center. It is planned that Bush will also build the Center at the same time as the residential units.

Of particular interest to meeting attendees were the top floor (banquet hall, commercial kitchen and teaching kitchen) and the cellar level which has rough-in space for heavy mechanical equipment, storage and ample space for a café. The fourth floor (nonprofit village and business incubator) was also mentioned.

Lambert described his current role in teaching the National Restaurant Association’s 16-hour ServSafe® course and as manager of the existing time-share kitchen incubator. His new role will be to gain support for the future “Bethesda GGT Community Café.” This working-title has been adopted because Montgomery County grants and State of Maryland bond bills have been awarded for designing, building and equipping a “Bethesda GGT Community Center.” Note, however, that present plans are for a cellar rough-in only so building and equipping of the proposed Community Café will be extra. Based on the experience of the Healthy World Café in York, Pennsylvania, this added cost might be in the \$150,000 range. A final professional cost estimate would be determined based on the proposed scope of the Feasibility Study



Graceful Growing Together, Inc.

Lambert continued talking about food safety laws, rules and regulations as they pertain to private vs. public consumption. For example, churches hold “potlucks” which would not be allowed in a café open to the public. The current time-share kitchen incubator and future café need to meet the standards of any commercial restaurant in Bethesda. Managers of the café would need the professional-level ServSafe® course whereas employees and volunteers should have Food Handler training.

Although time did not permit detailed discussion, the articles “Pay-what-you-can cafes let diners pay forward” from the Washington Post and “7 Core Values of a Community Café” from One World Everybody Eats (OWEE) were included in the handouts. The purpose of this initial Feasibility Discussion was to gauge the level of community support should the café be built.

Attendees included representatives from the following organizations:

- Bethesda Cares
- The Greater Bethesda - Chevy Chase Chamber of Commerce
- Bradley Hills Presbyterian Church
- Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church
- Graceful Growing Together, Inc.
- Healthy World Café (York, PA)
- Manna Food Center
- Montgomery County Government
- St. John’s Norwood Parish Episcopal Church
- Stonyman Farms (one of the current renters of the GGT Kitchen incubator)
- YMCA

Everyone in attendance completed a short survey. For those unable to attend this initial Feasibility Discussion, you may register your level of interest at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/QWD6HPF>

Melanie D.G. Kaplan, the Freelance Journalist who wrote the Washington Post article, said in an E-mail to Dave Lambert, *"My first thought when I came across the concept--even before I decided to write about it--was that I wanted to be involved in one of these in my own community."*

Everybody at the Feasibility Discussion came away with the same opinion.

Respectfully Submitted,



David Robert (Dave) Lambert
Director, Culinary Arts Initiative
Graceful Growing Together, Inc.