

2024 Update from Community Ventures
Submitted by: David La Fontaine

January 18, 2024

Dear members & attenders of the Old First United Church of Christ, I'm writing to bring you up to date on the progress of the work on Old First House, the permanent supportive housing development under construction on land belonging to Old First UCC along N. 4th Street.

As you probably already know, the area next to the church building is now a major construction operation. The project started construction in July 2023 and after a some delays with permitting, progress is now well underway. We held the ceremonial groundbreaking on November 20, 2023, which was attended by many Old First members, neighbors, politicians, project partners and funders. If you missed it, you can read about the groundbreaking on the PHDC website.

Also on December 4, 2023, we watched the historic moving of the historic building at 151 N. 4th Street, move off its 260+ year old foundation to its new home 48 feet away. The moving day was an exciting day on-site with some Old First members, the contractor, architect, and our staff watching the building makes its slow journey to its new location for hopefully the next 200+ years. You can view a timelapse of the building move and a video of the moving process created by our architect.

As site excavation work progressed after the building move, we found a very large reinforced concrete foundation that we understand was likely from a flagpole installed by one of Old First's longstanding, pre-eminent leaders, Owen Fox. We also discovered an old 1,000 gallon oil tank, which luckily that did not require additional environmental clean-up. We also brought back out our archaeologist to investigate the area underneath the basement slabs of both pre-existing buildings on the site and they did not find anything interesting.

With the above delays, we will likely complete construction in November 2024 and see our first residents moving in before the end of 2024. But as we get out of the ground in the next month, you will begin to see more dramatic changes week to week and month to month as you visit Old First.

As you likely know, the new building will include 34 apartments for formerly homeless individuals, office and Sunday school classroom space for the Church and a 2,400 SF commercial space. This year we are starting to seriously consider commercial tenant opportunities and seeking to engage a commercial broker to assist with identifying a commercial tenant. We are hoping for a commercial use that is open and welcoming to all parts of the community, including our residents, members of the congregation and neighbors.

Thank you and please feel free to call me at 215-564-6004 x101 if you have any questions.

David La Fontaine
Executive Director, Community Ventures