

Frequently Asked Questions

Nativity of Christ Greek Orthodox Church

Building on Our Faith Initiative

Last Updated September 2026

The following questions and answers are intended to keep parishioners informed about the Building on Our Faith Initiative, the first major capital project undertaken by the Nativity of Christ community in more than 35 years. This page will be updated regularly as new information becomes available. Please check back often.

The Specific Capital Projects

1. Why are each of the following projects being considered?

Elevator

The proposed elevator will improve campus accessibility and enhance participation in church activities. It will be located between the two sets of outdoor stairs on the upper level and across from the large hall, on the lower level.

Narthex

The proposed Narthex expansion will significantly improve the flow and functionality of the church entrance. It includes two restrooms, a multiuse space (e.g., cry room, bridal room, baptismal changing room), an adult baptistry, a visitor center, and much-needed storage space. The expansion will also better accommodate processions and other liturgical functions of the church.

Small Hall

A Small Hall would provide a more intimate space for parish gatherings and outreach activities. It was included in the original Fellowship Hall design, and its foundation already exists.

Enlarged Dome

The proposed enlarged dome would symbolize Heaven and eternity featuring Christ's presence through the icon of the Pantocrator (All-Powerful or Ruler of All). Over twice the size of the current cupola, it would provide space for traditional Orthodox iconography and be more appropriately scaled for the size of the expanded church building.

Design Considerations and Decisions

Elevator

1. Why was an elevator chosen instead of a ramp?

Building an ADA-compliant ramp to bridge the elevation change between levels would require a walkway that is impractically long, with numerous switchbacks. An elevator was determined to be a superior option that would also accommodate a broader number of people requiring accessibility.

2. Why was the location of the elevator moved?

The elevator location was moved to accommodate traffic flow along “Greek Street” (the walkway that leads from the parking lot to the back patio), eliminate the construction of a skybridge, and provide a more direct connection to the existing upper courtyard.

3. Why not install a three-stop elevator to provide access to the presently undeveloped 4,000 square foot space under the Fellowship Hall?

A three-stop elevator was determined to be financially unfeasible and unnecessary at this time. Currently there is no plan or ministry need for the undeveloped area under the Fellowship Hall. Should the need for additional space arise, another location has been identified for a second elevator that would provide access between the Fellowship Hall and the lower level.

4. What is a LULA Elevator, and why did NOC choose it?

A LULA (Limited-Use/Limited-Application) elevator is a compact elevator designed for low-occupancy public buildings. It provides many of the user-friendly features of a commercial elevator while offering significantly lower equipment, installation, and maintenance costs. A LULA was selected because it provides the functionality and durability needed to achieve our goals for accessibility while providing a more cost-effective solution than a full-scale commercial elevator.

5. What steps are being taken to ensure security while using the elevator?

The elevator will be designed with security and safety in mind. Its glass enclosure will provide visibility from outside, and access can be restricted when appropriate.

Narthex

1. Is an addition of this size needed?

The dimensions of the current Narthex design (1,700 square feet total) has been reduced by 500 square feet from the original renderings (23%) to ensure that each space is carefully crafted to accommodate its purpose, while also being cognizant of construction costs.

The addition will improve the functionality of the Narthex by providing two restrooms, a multi-use space (e.g., cry room, bridal room, baptismal changing room), much-needed storage, an adult baptistry, and a visitor center. The goal is also to provide a prominent main entrance to our church.

2. Will the church balcony (choir loft) still be functional?

Yes. However, because the height of the center church doors is being increased to accommodate liturgical processions, steps will be required on the balcony to get from one side to the other.

3. Why are the front towers asymmetrical?

Parishioner opinion was divided on the asymmetrical design of the front towers. Ultimately, the asymmetrical heights were selected as a design feature. The higher tower is its own focal point, while the lower tower draws the eye to the existing Bell Tower and the center of the campus. Subsequent refinements to the front domes include the use of shingles to match the existing roof and black crosses rather than gold.

4. Wouldn't one restroom in the Narthex be sufficient and also require less maintenance?

Perhaps, but due to the maximum occupancy of our church, two ADA-compliant bathrooms are required by code.

5. Why is the Visitor Center needed, and how will it be used?

A Visitor Center, will provide a central location where both visitors and parishioners will be welcomed to learn more about Orthodoxy. It will be a space for inquiry and curiosity, with resources that are unique to the Orthodox Faith: icons, books, prayer ropes, incense, greeting cards, children's materials, and other educational items.

6. What is the purpose of the Walk of Faith?

The Walk of Faith is a five-foot-wide decomposed granite walkway crafted with natural grading. It offers the opportunity for liturgical processions, such as on Great Friday, and also provides an additional connection between the front courtyard and the back patios.

7. Is landscaping included in the design?

Yes, the design and budget includes landscaping and irrigation for the front hillside featuring a grove of olive trees.

Small Hall

1. What is the final design of the Small Hall?

The design evolved from a traditional enclosed hall to an open-air pavilion. In response to additional parishioner feedback, the design was refined to provide an enclosed space while still taking advantage of the surrounding views and outdoor setting. The final design provides a closed hall with large glass doors that can be opened to create a seamless indoor/outdoor space.

Enlarged Dome

1. How will an Enlarged Dome enhance our church?

The Enlarged Dome will allow us to add the traditional icon of the Pantocrator and other iconography to the dome. It will let more natural light into the church and will be more appropriately scaled for the size of the expanded church building.

What Were the Findings of the Planning Study?

The Planning Study revealed a supportive and resolute parish. The Planning Study identified the following parish priorities: 1) Elevator, 2) Narthex, 3) Small Hall, and 4) Enlarged Dome

For more details, click [here](#) or visit the church website and navigate to: Home>Parish>Beyond 50 Plan>Beyond 50 Updates>Planning Study Summary.

The City of Novato Process

1. When will the construction documents be finalized?

We anticipate submitting the construction documents to the City of Novato by the second week in January 2027.

2. What is the timeline for receiving building permits?

Once the construction documents are submitted, City of Novato officials anticipate that the permit review process will take approximately four to six months.

3. When can construction begin?

Construction will begin when a) we receive our building permit, b) all funds and/or financing are in place, and c) the parishioners vote to approve the expenditure at a special Parish Assembly meeting.

Construction

1. Will the church be able to function during the construction?

Yes. Construction will take place to support and facilitate the needs of the parish as appropriate.

2. Can the planned construction be completed in phases?

Yes, but completing all four elements as a single project is the most cost-effective approach.

3. What capital improvements will be completed first?

Our goal is to complete all four projects together. However, the community's responses during the fundraising phase will help determine how the project evolves. At this time, the plan is to move forward with the Elevator and the Narthex projects.

4. How do we expand the original concept/design of NOC, preserving the founders' intent to build a church that represents the humble beginnings of a Greek village?

Inspired by the existing materials and architectural features, such as textured stucco, terracotta roof tiles, and various arches, the capital projects are designed to feel like a natural extension of the original construction.

Finance

1. What is the total cost of the projects?

McDevitt's conceptual bid, estimates \$4 million will be needed to complete the proposed projects. This estimate is available on the church website.

2. What has been invested in the project prior to the formal fundraising for Building on Our Faith?

\$360,000 was donated through the Beyond 50 initiative. \$200,000 was used for planning, including city planning and design review, surveying, engineering, and consulting. The remaining \$160,000 will be transferred to the Building on Our Faith Capital Campaign Fund.

3. How will the projects be funded?

Through pledges from the current fundraising campaign.

4. Are we factoring in budget unknowns?

Yes, a 7.5% contingency is included in the project budget. In addition, McDevitt Construction included a 10% contingency in its estimate to account for unforeseen costs.

5. Will each project need 100% funding to start, or is debt being considered?

The Parish Assembly approval desired that all projects be fully funded before construction begins. Ultimately, the path forward will depend on the success of the Capital Campaign and a careful assessment of the parish's financial position.

Because parishioners will have up to three years to fulfill their pledges, the full amount may not be available at the start of construction. In that case, a loan may be considered to bridge the gap and avoid delays or increased costs. The Finance Committee may also evaluate additional borrowing options if needed to complete the project.

Any decision to begin construction without 100% of funds in hand would require approval at a Special Parish Assembly.

6. Is there a budget for iconography?

No. Similar to when the church was built, the iconography will be a separate fundraising effort once construction is completed.

7. Will any items need to be purchased outside of the construction budget to receive a Certificate of Occupancy?

No items will need to be purchased outside of the Construction budget in order to obtain a certificate of occupancy.

8. When do we begin paying our general contractor, McDevitt Construction?

Payments to the contractor begin at the start of construction.

Fundraising

1. Why have we hired a professional fundraiser?

Following the successful completion of the Planning Study, the Parish Council and the Building On Our Faith Steering Committee determined that continuing to work with Jerry Minetos during the fundraising phase would provide valuable continuity and expertise. Having already met with parishioners and gained a thorough understanding of our parish, Jerry is well positioned to guide us through this next stage of the initiative. His decades of experience working with Orthodox churches on major capital projects will help us carry out this effort in an organized and thoughtful manner.

2. When will the fundraising campaign start?

The fundraising campaign began in June 2026.

3. How can we track fundraising goals and progress?

Regular updates on the campaign will be shared with the community through the WORD, email communications, and USPS mailings.

4. How much will each parishioner be asked to donate?

There is no set amount, and no one is under any obligation to give. Each parishioner is invited to participate at a level that reflects their financial ability and commitment to the future of our beloved Nativity of Christ community.

5. How do I pledge?

A confidential pledge can be made by completing a pledge card, which will be available in October, or in person by speaking with Jerry Minetos, our Orthodox Fundraising Consultant, or Fr. John directly.

6. How do I fulfill my pledge?

We are currently seeking pledges to be fulfilled over a three-year period, as funds will be needed throughout the building process. To maximize the funds available for the project, we encourage donors to fulfill their pledge by cash, check, automatic bank withdrawals, or transfer of other assets. Paypal and credit card payments are also available; however, we kindly ask that you cover the associated processing fees so that the full amount of your pledge can go toward the project.

7. Is the church accepting stock or other assets as a way of fulfilling a pledge?

Yes, the Finance Committee is available to discuss how other assets may be used to fulfill a pledge, including stock, real estate, and other holdings.