

Draft

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

GROUPS MINISTRY

PROPOSED TEN YEAR PLAN 2023-2033

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Grounds Principles

Preface

Introduction

Goals and priorities

Recommended Procedure for Adoption

GROUPS PRINCIPLES

We consider the UUC grounds to be a spiritual venue to be used for nature appreciation, meditation, prayer, and gentle recreation.

We welcome neighbors and community members to walk our grounds.

We consider the grounds and their flora and fauna to be a trust, and ourselves as stewards of that trust.

We seek to integrate the parts into a whole.

We will make the best use of what we already possess.

We are mindful of low maintenance and low cost objectives.

We will plant no invasive species.

We will limit the use of chemicals.

PREFACE

In October 2022, Grounds Chair Jim Flowers directed that an Ad Hoc committee be formed to draft a new plan for the grounds and report it back to the whole Grounds Ministry.

The committee has consisted of: George Lally (chair), Denise Martin, Rachel Crane, Ashley Dugan, Josh Dugan, K.C. Arceneaux, and Lucas Machi

Draft

INTRODUCTION

The Unitarian Universalist Congregation property consists of slightly less than six acres. It contains, in addition to our building and large parking area, a mix of fields, flower beds and islands, lawn, wild areas, a water feature, a playground and a half mile circumferential 'Meditation Path'. It stands as an 'Oasis' in an otherwise suburban neighborhood, providing for wildlife, a sanctuary, and for congregants and our neighbors, uplifting vistas and gentle recreation.

Twelve years ago however, the UUC property was mostly undeveloped except for the area around our meeting house. Many congregants had never seen the four acres that we refer to as the 'Upper Grounds', but in October 2012, a committee commissioned eighteen months earlier by the UUC Board, submitted a comprehensive plan for the grounds. That plan was promptly approved and in January 2013 a newly created Grounds Committee (now called 'Grounds Ministry') began its work of implementing the plan.

Some of the accomplishments of the ensuing ten years have been:

A new entrance sign, with nighttime illumination created at the bottom of our drive, the circumferential meditation path was completed with seven 'Meditation Points' each consisting of a mini-landscape with a donated bench and signage displaying one of the seven UU principles, upper and lower picnic areas were constructed each with a fire pit, a commemorative water feature was built, an enclosure was built to house bee hives, a 'Memorial Walkway honoring the contributions of notable UU's and others was built as a segment of the Meditation Path, extensive landscaping and plantings of flowers, shrubs and trees has occurred throughout the grounds, the placement of signage, outdoor sculptures, and other enhancements. A much needed shed was acquired through a donation to house tools and equipment. A major, less glamorous, albeit essential accomplishment has been the many thousands of hours that a small band of Grounds Ministry personnel and volunteers have spent in maintaining the property.

Thus the current state of the grounds evidences the fulfillment of most of the elements of the original plan. This new ten year Grounds plan embraces and carries forward the spirit and principles of that first plan while, at the same time, reflecting our evolving needs, resources and sensibilities. Like any plan, it should be seen as a guide, but not as a strait-jacket as we acknowledge that resources, priorities, and other factors change over time.

This successor plan is focused on identifying and enumerating specific goals and priorities for the next ten years. They are presented in a compact format on the following two pages.

NOTE: Each goal or action has an assigned priority denoted by a 1 - . (highest priority) 2. (medium priority) or 3. (lower priority). At this time, we did not attach specific time frames for the fulfilment of the individual goals/actions.

Draft

GOALS AND PRIORITIES

VISION

1. We reaffirm that our grounds are a spiritual venue as much as our meeting house is.
2. Our grounds plan and activities will embody and express the UUC Mission statement.
3. We reaffirm our commitment as stewards of the ground's flora and fauna by:
 - 1 - we will seek communication and collaboration with relevant external organizations -e.g. Sustainability Blacksburg
 - 1 - we will check with DCR/Crab Creek Watershed Project re protecting water shed and possible grant money
 - 1 - we will support more pollinator species and native plantings
 - 1 - we will return the 'Peacock Meadow' to a meadow
 - 1 - we will use fallen leaves as mulch in place
 - 2 - we will review pesticide practices/how they are implemented
 - 2 - we will review the work of the Green Sanctuary committee for relevant ideas
 - 2 - we will decrease mowable lawn area
 - 2 - we will allow dead trees to continue as habitat (e.g. Woodpeckers) as safety allows

AREA SPECIFIC

1. Improvements to the upper area:

- 1 - we will bring a water line to the water feature
- 1 - we will finish our 'three-season' upper bldg. (aka picnic shelter')
- 1 - we will extend water line/electricity to upper bldg.

2. Other Area Specific:

- 2 - we will enlarge/enhance playground
- 2 - we will acquire an additional shed adequate to contain a riding mower, and its trailer
- 2 - we will expand seating in lower picnic area
- 2 - we will expand use of paved spaces e.g. 'Yard sales', sell 'Painted spaces (as in Blacksburg High School)
- 2 - we will construct an all-weather walkway from Hardwood Drive to back entrance
- 3 - we will install solar lighting along entire (or selected portions of) meditation path
- 3 - we will add fencing along the UUC property line below the 'Peacock Meadow'
- 3 - we will acquire a shed for playground
- 3 - we will create a basketball /4 square area in parking lot

Draft

GLOBAL

- 1 - we will make the entire meditation path accessible
- 1 - we will develop strategy for more effective communication and engagement with UUC congregation
- 1 - we will establish regular grounds 'Work Days' and other events e.g. A recurring invasive vines 'Counteroffensive'
- 1 - we will make the UUC grounds available to other like-minded congregations for THEIR events
- 2 - we will add additional educational and descriptor signage
- 2 - we will acquire a riding mower and trailer for same
- 2 - we will host re-cycling event(s)
- 2 - we will, in collaboration with the UUC congregation, create initiatives that welcome neighbors -e.g. A 'Thank You Neighbors' day.
- 2 - we will, in collaboration with other elements of UUC, create grounds events for UUC families
- 2 - we will add additional recreational features to grounds as appropriate
- 3 - we will add more sculpture art to grounds

Recommended Procedure for Adoption of the Proposed Plan

Step One: The ad hoc committee submits the proposed plan to the entire Grounds Ministry.

Step Two: The Grounds Ministry makes such adjustments/changes additions/deletions that they deem necessary or appropriate.

Step Three: The Grounds Ministry's version is submitted to the congregations for comments /suggestions

Step Four: The Grounds Committee makes any final revisions and submits the Plan to the UUC Board.

Step Five: Approval by the Board