

Activating Hidden Assets: Making the Most of Sacred Places for the Wider Community

National Convening April 4-5, 2024

Briefing Packet

[One page summary, "Sacred Places By the Numbers"](#)

Tracking changes in faith communities and their buildings

["Congregations' Buildings: Information from the National Congregations Study and National Survey of Religious Leaders,"](#) prepared for the Convening by Anna Holleman, Joseph Roso and Mark Chaves (January, 2024)

["Twenty Years of Congregational Change: The 2020 Faith Communities Today Overview,"](#) Faith Communities Today, Hartford Institute for Religion Research

Further reading to dig deeper into trends:

- ["Studying Congregations' Persistence, Repurpose, & Death: Preliminary Results from a 20 Year Analysis in Chicago,"](#) Kraig Beyerlein, Ricardo Martinez-Schuldt, Madeline Johnson, Peter Ryan (March, 2024) Research supported by Partners for Sacred Places
- ["Closed Congregations and Their Buildings in a Wealthy and Mature Suburban County: A Preliminary Analysis of DuPage County, Illinois,"](#) Brian J. Miller (March, 2024) Research supported by Partners for Sacred Places
- ["Closing Congregations: On the Hunt for Patterns,"](#) [Canopy Forum](#), Wendy Cadge, Muna Guvenc, Feigele Lechtchiner
- ["Sacred Spaces in the Nation's Capital, 2008-2023,"](#) Sacred Spaces Conservancy (February, 2024)
- ["FACTS on Finance: Trends in Congregational Economics from the Faith Communities Today 2020 Study"](#)

What civic value do faith communities and their assets add to communities?

["The Economic Halo Effect of Historic Sacred Places,"](#) Partners for Sacred Places, Sacred Places report

Further reading on the civic value of faith communities:

- ["What a new plan to save the UK's churches says about their purpose in society,"](#) Alana Cant, [The Conversation](#)
- [Building Faith: A Sociology of Religious Structures](#), Robert Brenneman and Brian Miller (Oxford University Press, 2020)

What happens when they leave?

[“Envisioning a Future for Sacred Places in Transition.”](#) Sacred Places (Fall/Winter 2023-24)

[“Churches are closing in predominantly Black communities—why public health officials should be concerned.”](#) Yusuf Ransome, Linh Pham, Camille Busette (Brookings Institution), 5/3/22

For further reading on the impact of loss of sacred places:

- [“Removing Rome from the West: A Case Study of the Flip Side of the Halo Effect in St. Louis, Missouri.”](#) Tricia C. Bruce, PhD (March, 2024) Research supported by Partners for Sacred Places
- [“Some Black churches are leaving Boston, citing changing neighborhoods, higher costs.”](#) Boston Globe, 1/17/24

How can government agencies work with congregations as “hidden assets” in communities?

- [“Rethinking Religion and Secularism in Urban Planning.”](#) Planning Theory and Practice, Vol. 22, 2021, Issue#2, edited by Babak Manouchehrifar and John Forrester
- [“Planning design, and religion: America’s changing urban landscape.”](#) Sanjoy Mazumdar and Shampa Mazumdar, (Vol. 30, #3, Fall 2013), [Journal of Architectural and Planning Research](#)
- [“Report and Recommendations on the Application and Interpretation of Federal Historic Preservation Standards.”](#) Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, Sara C. Bronin (March, 2024)
- [“Church pews are sitting empty. Can they become affordable housing?”](#) Danny Nguyen, The Washington Post (3/9/24)

How can philanthropy partner with religion to strengthen communities?

[“What Philanthropy and Nonprofits Lose as Religion Fades.”](#) Drew Lindsay, [Chronicle of Philanthropy](#) (12/12/23)

[“‘Pretty Scary’: 7 Things to Know About Religion’s Decline and Charitable Giving.”](#) Drew Lindsay, [Chronicle of Philanthropy](#) (12/12/23)

Further reading on partnerships with philanthropy:

- [“Dozens of Black Churches receive total of \\$4 million for historic preservation.”](#) Adele M. Banks, [Religious News Service](#) (1/15/2024)
- [“New \\$14 million fund supports historic congregations.”](#) Celeste Kennel-Shank, The Christian Century (2/15/2017)

What new partnerships can be developed?

["Nonprofits Help the Nonreligious Search for Meaning in Their Lives,"](#) Emily Haynes, [Chronicle of Philanthropy](#) (12/12/23)

["Faith and the Nonprofit: 3 Stories of Churches Reborn as Engines of Social Good,"](#) Drew Lindsay, [Chronicle of Philanthropy](#) (12/12/23)

Further reading on new partnerships:

- ["Reimagining Religious Spaces: Opportunity Exploration,"](#) David E. Kresta, (6.9.2020), M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust
- ["Struggling with what to do with your church building? Here's how to find help."](#) Elizabeth Lynn, Faith and Leadership (3/7/23)
- [Gone for Good: Negotiating the Coming Wave of Church Property Transition.](#) Mark Elsdon (ed), William B. Eerdmans Publishing (2024)
- ["How Catholic Institutions are Building into Aging Infrastructure,"](#) Earthbeat/National Catholic Reporter (1/23/24)
- ["Church's free music lessons transform the community,"](#) Rev. Thomas E. Kim, United Methodist News (3/1/2024)