

The Alcove Garden Project at KUC

We are embarking on a project to beautify the entrance alcove on the south side of the building and make it more welcoming. Imagine transforming this grey square of asphalt into a place where plants and flowers flourish; where people are invited to sit in a patch of shade and chat with a friend, or to pause for quiet prayer and reflection on their own!

A small group is being formed to lead this initiative, and the group welcomes your ideas, questions and concerns.

This project is possible because we have been selected by Ecology Ottawa for a “depave project”. Ecology Ottawa has funding and volunteers and was looking for a partner organization to work with, to change a paved surface into a garden area, as a demonstration project.

One of the goals is to help people understand the impact of the proliferation of paved surfaces in urban areas. For example, with parking lots and roads designed to direct stormwater straight to drains, the groundwater doesn't get fully recharged, and toxic run-off is directed to the river instead of being naturally filtered. Ecology Ottawa wants to encourage property-owners to think of ways to redirect stormwater back to the earth.

Some questions that have arisen so far:

We just paved. Why are we going to de-pave now?

The new paving did not include the alcove area, so we won't be pulling up new pavement. In fact, we learned recently that the small garden beds along the wall are too high and the soil that is touching the brick can potentially degrade the brick wall over time. This project will allow us to lower the overall level of the gardens and protect the brick.

Can we do something more with the garden that reflects our mission?

Definitely. Several ideas have come up and we're interested in hearing more! One suggestion was for a Peace Garden, another was for a labyrinth, and others suggested planting a memorial tree in the centre of the alcove.

Will we still have a place for cars to pull up?

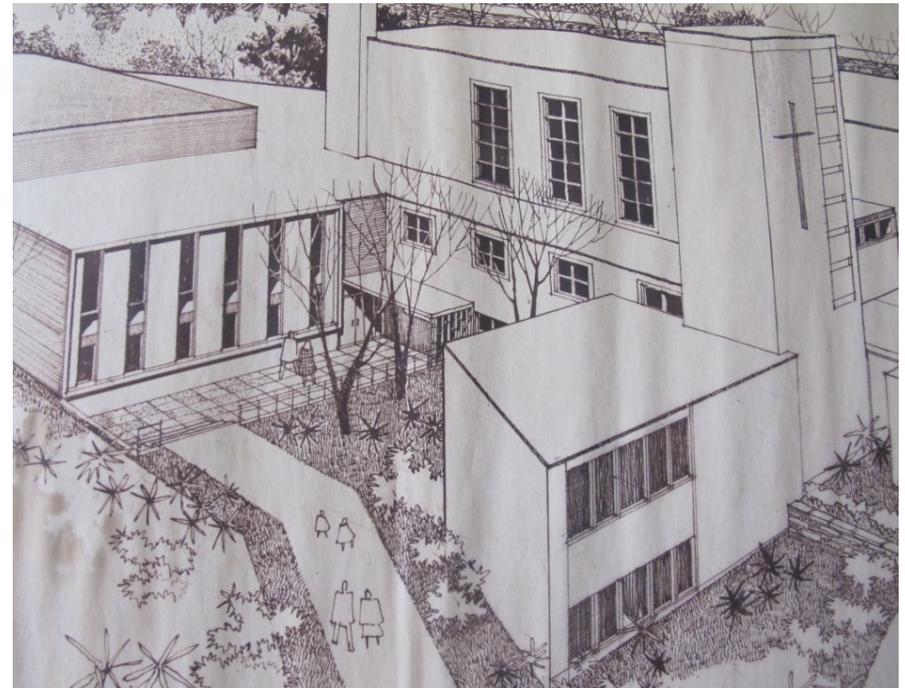
Yes. We won't be creating a “wall-to-wall” garden. We will maintain a driveway and hard paths to the doors.

We already don't have enough volunteers for our current gardens. Can we really take on another garden?

The garden will be low-maintenance. We are looking at “xeriscaping” which uses plants that don't need additional watering and little weeding. We also hope to find new volunteers – possibly from our tenant groups and regular users. Council is also taking this opportunity to consider our overall landscape vision and integrate the alcove into a full plan for the property.

Wasn't there a garden there at one time?

There were more trees and plants in that space in previous years. There is now a small strip of garden along the church wall. If you look at the architect's concept drawing for that area, when the hall addition was built, you can see a wide path and a large planted area. Here's the drawing:



We will be setting up meetings soon and developing options for the garden plan, aiming to do the actual work this June. We would welcome two more volunteers to help lead the project. Please contact Dan Rempel with your questions, or to volunteer: 613-722-5639 or d4nrempe@gmail.com. Or speak with Andrea Prazmowski in the office.