

“U”nique Team Spirit:

Six Congregations Team Up for New U-District Building Project

March 9, 2008

Six Christian faith communities in the University District have formed the nonprofit University District Ecumenical Campus Coalition (UDECC) to explore the possibility of building a single new home for all their churches and shared ministries.

University Lutheran Church, University Christian Church, University Baptist Church, University Temple United Methodist Church, Christ Episcopal Church, and the U.W.’s Cooperating Ministries in Higher Education have united in this endeavor. Many of these churches have been University District landmarks for nearly a century.

The proposed complex will be a notable achievement in fine architecture, potentially occupying an entire U District block. It will house a variety of worship spaces in which congregations can worship separately and together. Churches will share their new home with social service agencies, supporting their operations with volunteers and with funds liberated from the burdens of maintaining separate church buildings that are too large for their membership. The facility will be environmentally and economically sustainable, and fully accessible.

Public classrooms, assembly spaces, and a neighborhood park will make the facility a vital center of cultural and civic life for the community. Tenant spaces will accommodate compatible organizations and businesses. Affordable housing for populations in need will emerge from surplus church real estate.

UDECC has hired Seattle architect Clint Pehrson as their Executive Director to develop and lead the project’s feasibility study. Lorig Associates has been retained to advise the UDECC Board. Lorig’s past projects include the restoration of Seattle’s Paramount Theatre, the Eagles Auditorium for ACT Theatre, and the new student center at Seattle University. Perkins Coie has agreed to provide pro bono general counsel.

In addition to representatives from participating congregations, the UDECC board has at-large members Sinan Demirel (Executive Director, ROOTS Young Adult Shelter), Darel Grothaus (retired banker and interim Executive Director, Washington Association of Churches), Teresa Lord Hugel (Greater University Chamber of Commerce Executive Director), and Rev. Jack Olive (Acting Associate Dean of Seattle University’s School of Theology and Ministry).

Over the next 20 years the University District, one of three Regional Growth Centers in Seattle, will receive many of the city’s new homes and jobs, and UDECC is committed to enriching the spiritual and cultural dimensions of these developments. UDECC wants growth in the area to improve the lives of all neighbors, including its most vulnerable populations

Currently, UDECC is developing the facility design concept, drawing University District neighbors into ongoing conversations about the project, and securing additional funding.