

City of Kenmore receives help preserving Saint Edward Seminary

Aug 1, 2014



The city of Kenmore is working with Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission and Daniels Real Estate to preserve, rehabilitate and activate the former Saint Edward Seminary building.

— *image credit: Sarah Kehoe, Bothell Reporter*

The city of Kenmore is working with Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission and Daniels Real Estate to preserve, rehabilitate and activate the former Saint Edward Seminary building.

The state parks commission discussed the project with city representatives at a July 23 work session in Bellingham. The iconic building, which is on the National Register of Historic Places, is located at Saint Edward State Park in Kenmore and has been largely vacant since 1976.

“Saving the historic seminary building in a way that promotes sustainability and environmental values, while enhancing the local economy, is a huge opportunity for the city, and we are ready to be a helpful partner in this effort,” Kenmore Mayor David Baker said. “The team that has stepped forward is truly high caliber with strong community ties, as well as national prominence.”

In response to the Washington State Parks Commission’s Resolution in 2013, which directed state parks staff to explore partnerships with other public and private sector entities to rehabilitate and preserve the building, the city of Kenmore is proposing to play an active role with state parks to ensure a long-term lease to rehabilitate and reuse the building. This could include the formation of a Public Development Authority. A similar agreement was formed in 2013 when the Washington State Parks Commission approved a lease with a Public Development Authority chartered by the city of Port Townsend for a portion of Fort Worden State Park in Jefferson County.

“This is our first preliminary conversation regarding discovering an appropriate solution for the park and there is still a lot of work to do,” said Virginia Painter, spokesperson for Washington State Parks. “What we are excited about is that we have interested parties coming together to come up with solutions for the building.”

Seattle-based developer Daniels Real Estate has stepped forward with an interest in rehabilitating the building to its former use and grandeur. Daniels Real Estate is also in early conversations with Bastyr University to discuss potential ways the school might be involved. Bastyr, whose main campus is surrounded by Saint Edward State Park, is Kenmore’s largest employer. The Bastyr University Board of Trustees recently authorized university administrators to request a business plan from Daniels Real Estate for review as Daniels develops a proposal for the restoration of the historic seminary building.

“We’re greatly encouraged about the city of Kenmore’s interest in the historic seminary building at Saint Edward State Park,” said Cindy Whaley, State Parks Commission chair. “We look forward to continuing the discussion and working closely with the city to explore an appropriate solution for the building. We want to ensure that any future resolution is in keeping with the State Parks’ mission and preserves the significant natural and historical features of this park.”

Kevin Daniels, President of Daniels Real Estate, is a trustee for the National Trust for Historic Preservation and a local real estate investor well known for high-profile projects that focus on community revitalization and adaptive reuse of historic structures. In Seattle, Daniels’ portfolio includes the adaptive reuse of the downtown Sears & Roebuck store, now the headquarters for Starbucks and the largest certified LEED building in the U.S. His

portfolio also includes restoration of Union Station, now headquarters for Sound Transit and preservation of the First United Methodist Church, part of Daniel's Fifth + Columbia Tower.

"Our team is looking forward to working with the state Parks, city of Kenmore and Bastyr University to find a solution to restore the Saint Edward Seminary building to its former glory while providing the University with much needed classrooms and living spaces for their students," Daniels said.

The around 300 acres of Saint Edward State Park includes undeveloped Lake Washington waterfront, forest and trails, and will likely remain in the stewardship of the Washington State Parks system. Though the exact parameters for the potential lease area have yet to be determined, it would be proximate to the seminary and adjacent buildings. As is typical for rehabilitation of significant historic structures, some space in the seminary would likely be set aside for public access and interpretive areas, according to a city of Kenmore spokesperson.

In this scenario, the end product would be the rehabilitation of the seminary to its original use as classroom and student residential space — two uses that are needed by Bastyr University and are included in the University's Master Plan that was approved by the city of Kenmore in 2009. Bastyr University moved its main campus to its current location in 1996 through the purchase of the 51-acre campus that was originally Saint Thomas Seminary, from the Seattle Archdiocese in 2005.

"While this is still in the exploratory phase, if the project moves ahead, we welcome the opportunity to see how we might collaborate in preserving this historic resource under the guidance of Daniels Real Estate, a firm with a proven track record of success in local restoration projects," Bastyr University President Daniel Church said.

Instead of constructing new buildings and expanding the physical footprint on the Bastyr campus that is essentially surrounded by the state park, the 80,000-square-foot Saint Edward Seminary building would serve as a new university building. As an example of smart land use practices and sustainability, this project would preserve open space and natural features while breathing life back into an existing and historic structure.

"Broadly based public input and discussion will be an essential part of this journey, because this Park and seminary buildings are so important across our entire community and region," Kenmore City Manager Rob Karlinsey said.