

A Spiritual Home of Our Own

A CASE STATEMENT

Join Us in the Pursuit of Our Spiritual Home

- Our goals and growth have brought us to a time for action.
- The place has been identified.
- Our needs, requirements, and wishes can be met.
- A plan is in place to take us there.
- We need your talents and resources to make it happen.



This house is for the ingathering of nature and human nature.

It is a house of friendships, a haven in trouble, an open room for the encouragement of our struggle.

It is a house of freedom, guarding the dignity and worth of every person.

—Kenneth L. Patton

Where We Come From

We call ourselves “the church in a box” for good reason.

Since our first worship service on February 4, 2001, we have met in four different locations. The last of those moves was to the South Austin Senior Activity Center (SASAC), where we currently meet. But even now, the boxes must come out occasionally. When SASAC is not available, we have to pack up our belongings and meet elsewhere.

Wildflower Church began in 1998 when Carol Knight approached the Board of Trustees at First Unitarian Universalist (UU) Church of Austin with the idea of creating a UU congregation in South Austin. The idea was well received, and First UU was supportive with encouragement, consultation, and financial assistance throughout the years of our formation.

We began with 31 founding members; today we have more than 180 members. Part-time ministers served our congregation very briefly on two occasions, but for most of our history we have been lay-led by a remarkably talented and committed group of members.

In 2004, our congregation voted to hire a part-time Director of Children’s Religious Education (RE), Penny Burnette. From a handful of children and youth at that time, our Children’s RE program has grown to more than 90, and it attracts families with young children to become members of our congregation. The program grew so much that in 2006 we contracted with neighboring Starbright Preschool to use their facilities on Sunday mornings for several of our classes.

One hundred six members signed our charter on March 6, 2005, and 24 Wildflower members were able to attend the General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) that same year. During the opening ceremony, our members proudly displayed the Wildflower banner along with other UU churches in attendance.

That banner bears our logo, designed by member Jim Patterson. The logo incorporates three wildflowers: St. John's Wort, native to Eastern Europe where modern Unitarianism began; an aster, native to Massachusetts, the center of early Unitarianism in the United States; and a Mexican Hat, native to South Austin, our congregation's home.

We became a Welcoming Congregation of the UUA in 2006. This recognition symbolized our commitment to being inclusive and expressive of the concerns of bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender persons.

In May 2007, we called our first full-time minister, The Reverend Eliza Cooke Galaher. Since Rev Eliza's coming, we have grown in size, spirit, and service. Since our beginning, Wildflower has been known as the "social action church," and Rev Eliza has led us to grow in that area through our membership in Austin Interfaith and our participation in a yearly service trip to an area of need.

Where We Long To Be

Today we sometimes fill all the available chairs at SASAC on Sunday morning, and the parking lot is packed. We hear of people who can't find a parking place and drive away without attending worship. Our programs happen in three different buildings: SASAC, Starbright Preschool, and our separate office space on Fortview Drive. Meetings of more than 10 people have to be held in members' homes. What little storage space we have available to us is chock full, and many of our members store Wildflower property in their homes and garages.



We need a Home of our Own! We need a building to be the center of our church community, a place from which we can serve the wider community and welcome all into loving fellowship. Our dream is to create a home where we can seek spiritual growth and renewal, embrace our Unitarian Universalist values, and work for a world of peace, love, and justice.

We can achieve our dream for a Home of our Own if we all come together. Through the giving of our spiritual, physical, and financial support, we can make the dream a reality. Please join us!

Our Mission

Wildflower Church is a deliberately inclusive, open-minded religious community in the Unitarian Universalist tradition. We joyfully nurture one another in our lifelong spiritual journeys, and we commit to transforming ourselves and the world around us through acts of compassion, love, and social justice.

Our Vision

LIVING IN A CHURCH HOME OF OUR OWN, WE WILL:

- Nurture an environment that will help us become more effective in carrying out our mission and values.

OPERATING AS A PROGRAM-SIZED CHURCH, WE WILL:

- Develop, strengthen, and expand individual and collective leadership capacity;
- Develop leadership infrastructure and practices that increase effectiveness and cooperation among leaders;
- Create programs that flexibly adapt to and reflect the diverse needs of the congregation and its size.

LIVING OUR PROCLAIMED VALUES, WE WILL:

- Care for one another, our community, our world, and our earth;
- Create a community of Unitarian Universalists in which we support one another and share our joys and sorrows, creativity and productivity, fun and fellowship;
- Nurture and guide our children in their own spiritual paths to adulthood;
- Grow spiritually through mutually supportive exploration and reflection;
- Reach out, welcome, and embrace diversity of thought and especially of person in every form;
- Respond to social action opportunities by bringing greater justice to the world around us.

Why This Property, Why Now, and for What Purpose?

- Membership is expected to near 200 by the end of 2009 with projections to exceed 300 members in the next 4 years. Currently visitors have turned away due to lack of seating and parking.
- Children's Religious Education rosters have reached 90 children with no current space for Youth programs or office space for the Director of Religious Education and future staff.
- Adult Programs primarily take place in individual's homes; larger meetings and social events are limited.
- Current church office space cannot effectively house the growing staff or recordkeeping/file requirements. Meeting space is severely limited.
- Social Action and Justice projects are often limited to participating in events hosted by other groups; there is no space or time flexibility for us to host events, expand services, or provide services directly.
- Property price is very good, about \$50 per square foot. Interest rates for loans are very good. Choices of property on the market for our purposes are very limited.



Corral Lane — front of building, south side

CORRAL LANE PROPERTY MEETS OUR REQUIREMENTS

Must Haves

- ✓ Utilities – City Water
- ✓ 6.7 acres; ~20,000 sq ft; 150+ parking spaces
- ✓ Within geographic parameters
- ✓ Total price within \$1.5 million
- ✓ Potential for 300-person seating capacity

Would Like To Have

- ✓ Use of other parking lots on Sundays
- ✓ Natural Gas
- ✓ Trees, water, scenic view
- ✓ Near public transportation – .5 miles from bus stop
- ✓ Room to grow/expand
- ✓ Green building – reuse of 40-year-old building

Cannot Accept

- ✓ Septic system
- ✓ Contamination (lead paint, asbestos, pollution) – to be confirmed through inspections
- ✓ Noise level – near I35 but no problem within building

SEARCH FOR THE FUTURE WORKSHOP

What we heard in September 2008:

- Green building
- Space for the children
- Space to grow
- Meditation space
- Kitchen and social gathering space
- Gardens
- Capacity for Social Action services

What Happens Next and Who's Doing What

- A Steering Committee was appointed in August 2009 to work with the Building Committee and the Board to assure the overall planning and involvement of the areas contributing to the project. The Steering Committee is composed of our Minister and representatives from the Board, Project Management, Building Committee, Finance Committee, Communications Committee, Capital Campaign Team, and Implementation Team.
- A Property Search and Architect Search were performed by the Building Committee—recommendations were approved at the end of August. This property was selected after reviewing over 15 listings, 4 church building leads, and 3 property reviews. Price, location, and the potential to meet our short- and long-term needs were the primary reasons for selecting this building.
- We are entering into a contract that involves refundable “earnest money.” Once signed, the contract provides 120 days for the activities shown in the chart on the following page.
- The Capital Campaign activity will be defined and provided to you shortly before it starts.
- When the final decision to buy is made by the Congregation, an Implementation Plan will be provided to manage the remodeling and move-in activities. People will be identified (yes, we need volunteers) to work on various functions within the Implementation Team, for example, Aesthetics (design, art and furnishings), Facilities Management, and Landscaping.

Project Phases: 120 Days	Inspections Days 1–30	Preliminary Design Days 31–75	Capital Campaign Days 76–97	Interim Financing & Mortgage Days 98–119	Congregational Vote Final Week	Closing +30 Days
What happens?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Architectural review ▪ Structural engineer ▪ Mechanical, electrical, plumbing engineer (with Austin Energy) EPA Phase I 	Architect's schematics & renderings of remodeling for sanctuary, broad phases of remodeling and repairs or replacements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pledges are taken ▪ Lump sums identified ▪ Other gifts identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mortgage application ▪ Promissory Notes offered and assigned 	Notice of meeting three weeks before with all known information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Funding finalized ▪ Prepare to move funds from all sources for closing
What will we learn?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Whether there are any “show stoppers” ▪ What condition property & building are in ▪ Very rough estimate on upgrades, repairs and remodel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Viability of and costs estimates of remodeling. ▪ Refined ongoing costs for HVAC and other maintenance items. ▪ Potential tenants and rent revenue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Financial feasibility to buy ▪ Timing of funding ▪ Level of interim funding to be offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Approval of mortgage funding ▪ Amount of Promissory Notes accepted 	Updates on all information over last three weeks	
What will be decided?	Whether to proceed with next phase	Whether to proceed with next phase	Whether to proceed with next phase	Whether to proceed with next phase	Whether to buy the property	
Who is involved?	Building, Steering & Board decide; congregation informed	Building, Steering, Implementation & Board decide; congregation informed	Building, Steering, Stewardship & Board decide; congregation informed	Building, Steering, Finance & Board decide; congregation informed	Congregation	Board
What is the cost?	\$12,000	~\$9,600	\$7,200 + materials (Target \$600-700K)	Target \$1.5 million total funds	N/A	Cost of Building + Closing

Understanding the Risks and Opportunities

In any project of significant size there are many risks. However, we cannot look at risks alone. We must understand the probability of those risks and whether we can mitigate, control, or eliminate the risk. Additionally, with any project or investment, we also must weigh the risks in relation to the opportunities. Here's how we will make these assessments.

Risks

- ***Timeliness:*** Getting to the end of any project, or phase within a project, requires an understanding of the activities, the probable time to complete those activities, and the dependencies between activities. To control this kind of risk, we have a project plan developed by the Steering Committee members. We will manage our project in accordance with the plan, making adjustments or solving conflicts along the way. It is extremely critical that we manage the timeliness within the 120-day contract period.
- ***Cost of the project:*** We will obviously only have so much to spend on the building, fees, closing, and remodeling. As with any remodeling effort, we will know more about the cost as the level of detail and estimation is refined. There are three levels of cost estimate: rough, preliminary design, and detailed design. Throughout this effort, we will assess the new information from the various design estimates and build that into an ongoing analysis of what we can afford. We'll also build in relevant contingencies. Finally, as we have better estimates after detailed design, we will find out how much money is needed for remodeling. If the Capital Campaign produces less than expected, or the remodeling costs are more than expected, then we'll work with the architect on phased remodeling.
- ***Costs of ongoing maintenance and living in the new building:*** We already know that there are extremely high costs associated with the HVAC. We also know that providing services for a larger building will cost more, and we have projections for these ongoing costs. However, we are working on efforts that will dramatically reduce the costs of the HVAC (and, will help us be a

greener building). When we finish the inspection phase, we will have better information about ways to control and reduce the HVAC costs. During the preliminary design phase, we will also look into more specific costs for services, such as janitorial, security, and landscaping. We will continue to assess this against our budget and revenue. If the costs are found to be prohibitive, we will recommend stopping the project.

- ***Increased revenue through tenants and special events:*** The size of the property lends itself to renting some of our space. Perhaps a day care center or a Jewish congregation might rent the space. Also, there are some initial estimates on the possible revenue from special occasion rentals. As we progress through the preliminary design phase, we will be able to firm up potential tenants and revenue.

- ***Human resources/volunteers:*** There are three points in time that require volunteers. If we are not able to find volunteers for these areas, then we could have a risk that cannot be overcome, and will signal that the project will not be successful. Please volunteer if you have time, interest or skills that can help in these areas.
 - First, through the 120-day contract period, we need more knowledgeable people to participate in finance aspects and evaluation of ongoing costs. We will need volunteers to be involved in various reviews of remodeling design. We absolutely need more volunteers for the Capital Campaign.

 - Second, to prepare for the ongoing responsibilities, light remodeling activities, and move-in activities, we need leaders and team members on the Implementation Team. This is where most of us can participate in some form of clean-up, painting, light carpentry (such as bookcases or shelving), prepare or build a playground, and cooking or refreshments for workers, or babysitting for workers.

 - Third, we need volunteers to oversee or manage other ongoing activities. Part of this is to consider whether we can support an activity through volunteers, or whether a service can be paid for to reduce the dependency on our congregation. Can we do cleaning or landscaping, or is the effort too large to manage ourselves and we need to build in the costs of a service?

Opportunities

Of course, every challenge can be an opportunity. As a community, we have a huge opportunity to learn, work, and laugh together. Regardless of the outcome on this property, we hope to take important learning (and laughing) experiences with us.

- **Price:** For this property, the space and acreage, it is a very attractive price. Interest rates are low, which helps us afford more within the UUA guidelines for debt service, no more than 25% of operating expenses.
- **Going Green:** One very effective green action you can take is to reuse an existing structure. Reusing instead of building new dramatically reduces the energy costs of producing new building materials and new construction. Additionally, there are reduced impacts on use of some natural, less sustainable, products like wood. Reuse of an existing structure also reduces the impact on landfill. Since parking already exists, we will not need to add to impervious ground cover. Since we need to consider energy costs anyway, we have an opportunity to improve the effective and efficient use of energy in this building.
- **Presence:** Having a permanent home will bring advantages and opportunities to further influence our community and to expand our membership.
 - **Our Home:** There is a sense of comfort, belonging and permanence when you have a place you can count on.
 - **Our Life Rituals and Celebrations:** Having a place that represents, marks and keeps memories of our lifelong spiritual journeys will build community and commitment.
 - **Community Hosting:** A place that welcomes our surrounding community, through rentals, celebrations, and entertainment creates a neighborhood that cares for one another.
 - **Community Outreach:** A place for strengthening and expanding our social action and social justice efforts, extends our reach and ability to contribute. It aids us in our commitment to transform ourselves and the world around us.

We Need Your Support

Funding Approach and Financial Opportunities

Wildflower Church, well on its way to being ten years old, has never been in debt. Taking out a mortgage is a big step for us and we want to know as much about it as we can.

The estimated cost of this building plus required renovations and remodeling will total \$1,500,000. How will we come up with that much money?

Source of Funds	Amount
Capital Funds Already Accumulated	\$ 100,000*
Capital Campaign Pledges	700,000
Mortgage	700,000
<i>Total</i>	<i>\$ 1,500,000</i>

*Estimated amount of funds remaining in our Capital Fund after expenditures related to the capital campaign, inspections, and architectural plans are paid.

What is a capital campaign?

A capital campaign raises money for expenses that are not a part of a congregation's operating costs. In our case, the capital campaign will raise money to buy our building.

What is a capital campaign pledge?

A capital campaign pledge is a promise made by a donor to pay a certain amount of money to the church, usually over a period of three years. However, some donors may choose to pay their pledge in a lump sum or other increments.

Why do we think we can raise \$700,000 in capital campaign pledges?

Most congregations raise three to five times their annual budget in capital campaign pledges. If our budget is about \$200,000 a year, our target falls easily within that range.



Who will lend us \$700,000?

One source of funding is the Unitarian Universalist Association. We can apply for a mortgage in the amount equal to the total of our capital campaign pledges up to \$700,000 from the Association. Other sources may be local lending institutions to which our realtor has referred us.

When will the capital campaign happen?

The capital campaign will be launched about 60 days after we sign an earnest money contract. Planning and preparation for the campaign are already in progress so we'll be ready to begin when the time comes.

What will happen during the capital campaign?

Every contributing member of our congregation will be visited by a Visiting Steward to talk about our plans, hear the ideas of the contributors, and ask them to make a pledge to the campaign. This pledge can be paid all at once, monthly for three years, or any pattern of giving in between these options that is convenient for the giver. We hope you will be as generous as you can within your unique financial situation.

What about bridge financing for the initial down payment on the property?

We will offer unsecured promissory notes to our members at a simple interest rate that is slightly above the market rate for banks' certificates of deposit of the same amount and term length. We will offer some one-year terms and some two-year terms. At the end of that time, our capital campaign funds should have grown to a level that meets our capital outlay.

What other funds are available?

When we have completed a successful capital campaign (one that raises at least \$700,000), we will be eligible to receive a **First Home Grant** in the amount of \$25,000 from the Unitarian Universalist Association. According to our UUA Stewardship Consultant, David Rickard, if all criteria are met, this is a guaranteed grant of up to \$25,000. **The Loan Guarantee Program** of the UUA offers to guarantee a loan made by a local lender in cases where the lender requires this support before agreeing to loan money to a congregation.

What is my role in this process?

Your role is to be as well-informed about the project as you possibly can be. Visit displays about the building acquisition project when you attend worship on Sunday mornings; listen for church life announcements about the project; read updates in the Weekly News and the monthly newsletter; attend Conversations with the Board on the first Sunday of each month and at other times they are offered; ask questions; share

your ideas with people on the Steering, Building, and Capital Campaign Committees; and plan now for making as generous a contribution to our building acquisition as you are able.

How much should I pledge to the capital campaign?

We ask that you give as much as you can afford to give based on your individual circumstances, and only you can make this decision. If you can pledge three to five times your annual pledge to the operating budget, it will take us a long way toward reaching our goal. Whatever your commitment, your pledge will also be a valuable contribution toward our goal.

Whatever and however you choose to give, we ask that you not decrease your annual stewardship pledge while pledging to the capital campaign. Since most people give their annual stewardship pledge from their own operating budgets, we suggest you look for alternative or supplemental ways to give to the capital campaign:

- ***Make direct donations:*** This can be paid from your current income or from your savings.
- ***Use stock transfers:*** By donating appreciated stock, you maximize the tax advantages of your gift. Other options include bonds and mutual funds.
- ***Give from Your IRA:*** If you are 70.5 years old or older, you can make a tax-free transfer of up to \$100,000 at least until the end of 2009. Consult your tax advisor about this option.
- ***Give a combination of cash and assets***
- ***Donate former monthly payments:*** If you finish paying off a car loan, student loans, or some other kind of loan, donate the monthly amount you were paying for that loan to the church instead.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Get involved!
Volunteer.
Be a canvasser.
Pledge.
Vote.

For more information, contact any member of the Steering Committee.

Steering Committee:

Rev. Eliza Galaher
Paula Vaughan
Jan Austin
Graham Agar
Phil Hewitt
Evelyn Bookout
Pamela Nelson
Michael Stanbury
Penny Burnette
Renee Kingsland
Jaime Gomez
Michael Finney

Building Committee:

Paula Vaughan, co-chair
Phil Hewitt, co-chair
Eva Andries
Dagmar Grieder
Louise Messano
Gay Patterson
Gay Phillips
Richard Pruitt

Communications Team:

Michael Finney
Holly Gonzalez
Renee Kingsland