

THE JOURNAL RECORD SECTION B

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ELEVATIONS

WESLEY FOUNDATION HEADQUARTERS

Building beacons of faith

BY KIRBY LEE DAVIS
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STILLWATER – A pair of electronic lanterns blaze atop 25-foot-tall columns, casting a rippling glow on their fiery United Methodist logos.

Those torches anchor the new Wesley Foundation campus headquarters the Rev. Michael Bartley hopes to build at what's arguably the most prized development spot in Stillwater, ideally situated beside the Oklahoma State University student union and library mall, fraternity row, Theta Pond, the coming OSU performing arts center and Campus Corner.

"Most churches don't want to be landlocked, but for a campus ministry, being landlocked by your mission field is absolutely perfect," said Bartley, pastor of the six-employee nonprofit. "On all four sides of us is the mission field we're called for."

His United Methodist branch already holds that 1-acre corner at 823 W. University Ave., but with an 8,000-square-foot structure built in 1957 that's long lost its effectiveness.

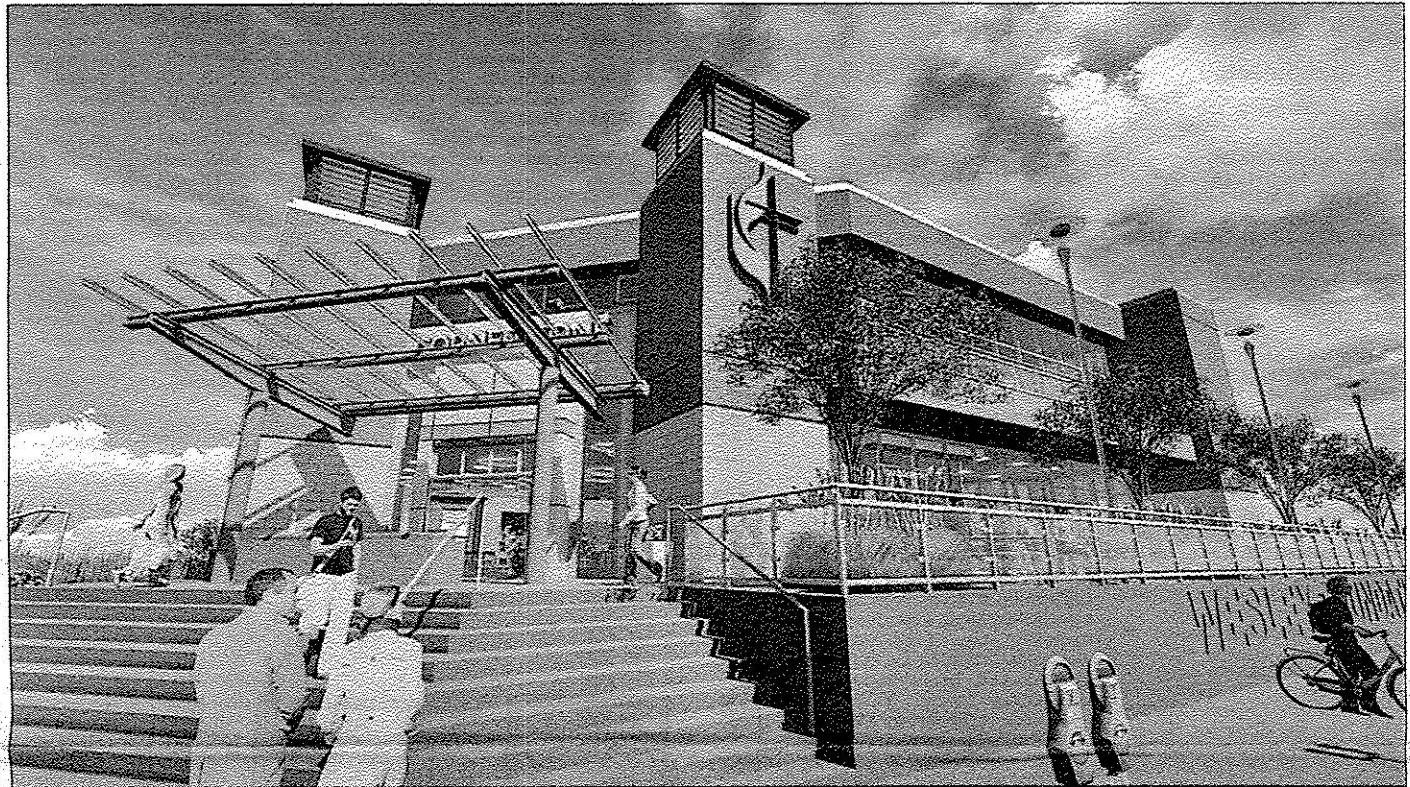
"Through the years I've watched that building deteriorate to the point where it's in really bad shape," said Tulsa architect Gary Sparks, who actually lived a year in that basement while attending the university in the 1960s. "It needs to be replaced."

Two years ago Bartley approached Sparks, principal of Tulsa's Sparks Reed architectural firm, to develop an alternative home for the foundation. Sparks and Project Architect John Alig came up with a two-story, 23,676-square-foot steel and concrete structure boasting twin 13-foot-tall glass walls on two sides.

The exterior of this estimated \$6 million project presents an elevated modern front designed to mix well with OSU campus buildings, Bartley said. The interior delivers flexible floor plates easily adaptable to generational changes.

Bartley pointed out how the existing building not only lacks space for effective worship, but also fails to accommodate today's student activity needs.

"It has basically one large multipurpose room and a bunch of tiny rooms that are kind of unusable by anything but small groups," he said, noting the design's post-World War II origins. "It has more to do with dating



The building will be situated beside the Oklahoma State University student union and library mall, fraternity row, Theta Pond, the coming OSU performing arts center and Campus Corner. COURTESY RENDERINGS

than it had anything to do with a religious community."

The proposed new building also supports student mingling through a coffee shop, fireplace-warmed gathering places, dining area, and other elements. Alig said the second floor's large, L-shaped space will unite up to 400 people in worship or some other event. That floor also promises a 1,484-square-foot balcony overlooking the OSU campus.

"The basic concept is to draw the students into the building, because it's got such a great location," Sparks said. "You want to come into the building and see all the activities that are going on and participate in it."

To keep this Wesley Foundation home from suffering the same problems of its predecessor, Alig crafted all these interior amenities with no permanent structural elements.

"Technology's going to change, student lifestyles are going to change, and they're going to change faster in the future than they ever had before," Sparks said. "So we need to accommodate that."

To guarantee sustainability, Bartley said the foundation is seeking to build a \$3 million-plus endowment while it raises construction funds. That comes above its estimated \$500,000 annual



budget needs, four-fifths of that coming from donations and private fundraising.

"We've got about \$2 million pledged for the building," he said, noting their target of up to \$6.5 million.

With public meetings set or planned for Oklahoma City, Tulsa and Enid, Bartley hopes to meet his goals and launch construction before the end of 2015.

In this proposed building, Bartley foresees giving the Wesley Foundation a solid Stillwater home that will last 75 to 100 years.

"It's going to be a major upgrade to that part of the campus and city," Sparks said. "It's going to add a lot to that area."

\$6M
The estimated cost of the project.

By the numbers

- First floor: 11,980 square feet
- Second floor: 11,696 SF (excluding the balcony)
- Total conditioned space: 23,676 SF
- Second-floor balcony: 1,484 SF
- Length of building east to west: 124 feet 7 inches
- Width of building north to south: 113'8"
- Worship space seating (as designed): 437
- Floor-to-floor height: 17'0"
- Total height of building: 38 feet (excluding mechanical screening)

SOURCE: SPARKS REED