

## Old seminary in Saint Edward State Park to become lodge

Washington State Parks approved an agreement to rehab the St. Edward Seminary

By ZOSHA MILLMAN, SEATTLEPI.COM STAFF Published 10:09 pm, Tuesday, January 10, 2017



Photo: Karen Ducey, Seattle Post-Intelligencer

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The St. Edward Seminary Building on the grounds of St. Edward State park in Kenmore.

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In an historic decision earlier this week, the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission voted unanimously to approve a lease agreement that would save the Saint Edward Seminary building in Saint Edward State Park near Kenmore.

The commission accepted a 62-year lease with Daniels Real Estate of Seattle to rehabilitate the historic building.

The agency has explored a number of options for rehabilitation since it acquired Saint Edward State Park in 1977. Its goal has always been to preserve, rehabilitate and use the park's iconic seminary building along with the rest of the grounds. The plan dates

back to September 2014.

"In 2014, they decided they were either going to need to walk away from the building or find a public, private, or nonprofit to help rehabilitate it," said Virginia Painter, Washington State Parks communication director. "They very much wanted to rehabilitate it ... (but) it's one that requires quite a bit of revenue to take care of."

That's where Daniels Real Estate comes in. It will invest nearly \$50 million to help rehab the historic building, purchasing a 9.7-acre private property that lies adjacent to the park and transferring it to the parks commission in exchange for using the building as a lodge. Painter says Washington State Parks expects a viable partnership with whomever is managing the building and thinks the restoration will be beautiful.

"This project to rehabilitate Saint Edward Seminary will be a great value to the state of Washington," said Steve Milner, commission chair, in a statement. "Thanks to Daniels, our staff and the public who participated in our very thorough public process, we are going to be able to change a significant liability into an asset for our state. Our state's population continues to grow, and Saint Edward and the Seminary are in an urban area. I think the historic structure will draw new people into the park and introduce them, not only to the historic features but the natural aesthetic of the park and our state."



The proposal drew some backlash from local community members who worry about the changing nature of the park, the access locals have to the property and the amount of outdoor education space and parking revenue.

A petition opposing the commercial development in the park **drew almost 3,000 signatures**, arguing that the building “must remain forever publicly owned and preserved in its entirety ... for the needy, for education and for the arts, whether restored, partially restored or returned to open space.”

Last week’s final public meeting drew a crowd of 200, which the commission reported was mostly in favor of the project.

It’s anticipated that the new lease agreement will generate additional revenue for the state parks department (thanks to Discover Pass sales and roughly \$260,000 per year through access fees from overnight lodge guests) once the property is up and running.

Though there are no details yet about a grand unveiling, the lease won’t go into effect until completion of the land transfer. Additionally, the city of Kenmore must sign off on Daniels’ development plan, which will likely come in spring.