

## United Methodist Center Relocation Task Force

A United Methodist Center Relocation Task Force, charged with considering and recommending to the Conference Board of Trustees a new location for our North Georgia Conference United Methodist Center, has been at work for several years on behalf of the Annual Conference.

The lease on the current United Methodist Center, located at 1700 Century Center Blvd., Atlanta, terminates March 31, 2023. The goal of the task force has been selecting and planning for a mission-centered strategic headquarters for the North Georgia Conference in 2023.

Jane Brooks, former Executive Assistant to the Bishop, was the initial chair of the task force, working with former chair of the Trustees, John Simmons. Upon Jane's retirement and John Simmons' rotation off as Chair of the Conference Board of Trustees, Terry Walton, Executive Assistant to the Bishop, succeeded Jane as chair of the Task Force, and Julie Childs, present Chair of Trustees, succeeded John Simmons. Additionally, Conference Lay Leader Nate Abrams succeeded Bill Martin in 2021.

The current task force members are: Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Julie Childs (chair of Conference Board of Trustees), Bert Neal (representative of the Conference Board of Trustees), Nate Abrams (conference lay leader), John Pinson (cabinet representative), and Terry Walton (assistant to the bishop and chair).

Working closely with architect/planner, Jim Winer, of Make3 Architecture / Planning / Design, and consulting with Conference Treasurer Keith Cox, the task force focused its goals and priorities.

The task force adopted 5 parameters originally set by the Board of Trustees in 2015:

1. Affordability,
2. Accessibility,
3. Visibility,
4. Sustainability, and
5. Availability.

The members recognize that the United Methodist Center is a witness to the rest of North Georgia and its location makes a statement. The task force heavily weighed selection of a location where church and community are experiencing revitalization and innovative resurrection. In other words, let's align our next home with our mission. In addition to the 5 parameters, the task force sought:

- Shared space with a United Methodist Church or a United Methodist related agency
- In an underserved community
- And a thriving community

The committee recognizes the changing needs for the United Methodist Center. In the past two years we have learned that virtual work is productive and realistic. This means the needed square footage is significantly less than the present office space. Present square footage is 15,376. Proposed square footage is 5,400.

Possibilities for leasing and owning were explored.

Ultimately eight sites were shortlisted and considered by the task force: Decatur First UMC, Avondale Patillo UMC, Sandy Springs UMC, Embury Hills UMC, Chamblee First UMC, Central UMC, Global Ministries Headquarters, and College Park UMC.

After much consultation, prayer, and discernment, property adjacent to College Park UMC was selected by the task force as a location for a post-pandemic hybrid space that will allow The United Methodist Church to be a witness across North Georgia of the larger church.

Centrally located, the site is convenient to I-75, I-85, I-285, and I-20, it is served by a Marta rail station, and is just a few miles from the Atlanta airport. The property is across the street from city hall in busy downtown College Park.

The Conference Board of Trustees made an onsite visit to College Park to see the possibilities firsthand. The Board of Trustees members were genuinely impressed with the development and the sense of community within and around the College Park UMC and the College Park community. The trustees feel the most beneficial short- and long-term plan for the North Georgia Conference is to build an office building that will fit into a development already occurring within and around College Page UMC.

The budget for the new United Methodist Center is \$3.4 million dollars. Funds from the sale of the Simpsonwood Conference and Retreat Center were designated for the construction of the new UM Center and are projected to be adequate.

Working with architect and planner Jim Winer, initial plans have been drawn for a 1-floor, 5,400 square foot building, at a cost of \$3,377,500. This total includes program management, moving expenses, site assessment, legal, environmental, civil, landscape, architectural, interiors, graphics, structural, mechanical, electrical, plumbing, voltage, audio visual, testing, inspections, construction, furniture, equipment, communications, security, signage, and contingency.

Upon the approval of the task force recommendation earlier this year, the Conference Board of Trustees began taking steps to purchase the College Park property. In the current real estate market, time is of the essence. The purchase may be complete by the time of Annual Conference; however, if this location is not supported by the members of the 2022 Annual Conference, the developer associated with the project has assured the Trustees of their interest in purchasing back the property.

After Annual Conference, the Board of Trustees is prepared to take next steps in building our next United Methodist Center. The current landlord has expressed flexibility in offering continued lease of the upper floor of the present United Methodist Center.

Your Relocation Task Force and Conference Board of Trustees have devoted countless hours, prayer, and discernment to come to this decision. The present task force extends our gratitude to the members who preceded us. It has been an honor to each of us to serve in this way.

Terry Walton  
Chair, United Methodist Center Relocation Task Force