

The Umstead Park United Church of Christ Story.

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UPUCC is a young congregation, and it's had an interesting journey into its current building. It first met in 1999 at a middle school in Raleigh with 120 people in attendance.

This was a new community that would be governed by the local congregation, so congregants wrote the covenant that serves as a central document for the church. The third portion of the covenant proclaims that the congregation will seek...

A committed, mutual relationship with the wider world, which will include claiming *our inescapable connection with the sacred earth and all of creation*

A "building **theology**" evolved during the next several years. They didn't really make finding a permanent home a priority in the early years, but they did commit that when the time came, the space would reflect the theology they professed. They wanted a building that would be open, green and accessible to nature. And from the beginning, they knew they wanted to apply for LEED certification, something that hadn't been done by a faith community in NC or we believe in the Southeast. LEED stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification, of the U.S. Green Building Council.

In the early 2000's, when they decided to begin a land search to buy or build, it became a laborious process, as they simply were not being successful in finding the right size existing building or the right piece of land at the price they could afford.

This is when it's gets really interesting for me. A member of the congregational land search committee was a partner in BBH Design, an architectural firm devoted to building green, and they were also looking for space to expand, so he proposed looking for a building that could be co-inhabited by the firm and by the congregation.

Thus a building adjacent to Umstead Park was found and purchased in 2006 by the two entities as a jointly-owned building. Both the church and the architectural firm committed themselves to applying green principles in renovating the building, which they opened in August 2007.

BBH Design performed the architectural work that led to the LEED Gold certification for the 32,000-square-foot building.

A really unique aspect of this project lies in the staggered use of *common elements of the facility*. While the building houses distinct office space, and distinct church space, they share a common public entrance (which serves to intersect the building right down the middle), conferencing space, public toilets, and parking but use by the tenants rarely overlaps. UPUCC primarily occupies the *common elements* of the facility during Sundays and evenings and BBH typically uses this space Monday through Friday during the days. BBH and UPUCC share the philosophy/theology that whereas the perfect "green building" would be no building at all, a building in use 24/7 for different purposes is better than two different buildings that stand unused half of the time.

In the church portion, there is a large worship space, children's and adult's learning spaces, a small library, a teen room, a pastor's office, a large kitchen and a large reception area, and these can be used during the week. There is also 4000 sq feet of unused space yet to be developed. The congregation is exploring a way to support community-based ministries in that space, such as work with migrants, food banking, etc. Currently, *The Healing Place*, a recovery and rehabilitation facility for homeless people with alcohol and drug dependency uses some church space during the week.

About the Gold certification, it's the second highest of four levels of LEED certification. The certification recognizes the innovative reuse of the building as well as number of green features, such as:

- High-efficiency heating and cooling
- Recycling and reuse: Recycled materials, including recycled carpets—exterior materials were re-used. And light fixtures and other existing materials were reused in the new layout.
- Priority parking for low-emitting and fuel-efficient vehicles
- Bicycle storage and showers and changing rooms for cyclists
- Water efficiency—with low-flow toilet fixtures and automatic faucets.
- Protection of habitat
- Maximum use of open space—tenants are washed with harvested day light avoiding the need for artificial lighting except on evenings and cloudy days.
- Construction waste management—during construction, carpet and other materials were segregated for recycling.

Both UPUCC, as a congregation, and BBH, as a green firm, are committed to recycling and to helping their members leave a lighter carbon footprint on the planet. UPUCC and BBH cooperate in recycling paper, cardboard, plastic, metal and glass containers. UPUCC encourages their own members, as well as BBH workers, to bring to the building their household batteries, CFL lights, Styrofoam egg cartons, and cell phones (and other small electronics) for recycling.