

Construction

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New Seattle U building: small size, big impact

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A \$7 million renovation project at Seattle University is intended to give the school “a signature building” and a new gateway on 12th Avenue.

A vacant, 8,500-square-foot building at 12th and East Marion Street is being expanded by 3,600 square feet to house university admissions and alumni relations. An art gallery, meeting rooms and reception space are also planned.

“It’s a critical project for the university,” said Michael Kerns, associate vice president for facilities. The building is designed to earn a LEED gold rating, he said, and to serve as the school’s welcome center, adding some life to 12th Avenue.

A chimney tower in the building — designed to draw cool air out during the summer — will help make it a beacon for the university, Kerns said.

The single-story building on the site was built in 1978 and covered with wood siding. Brick and painted metal panels are planned for the new structure’s exterior. Much of the public face — along both 12th and Marion — will be lined with large windows.

“We wanted to reuse as much of the existing building as possible,” said James Cary, the architect. More than 90 percent of the structure will be retained.

To earn its LEED stripes, the building will have skylights, solar panels, a green roof and some natural ventilation. A raised floor will house the mechanical system, data and power distribution. Moveable air vents in the floor will keep occupants comfortable more efficiently than ceiling vents, Kerns said.

“One of the main green features is that we built only what was needed,” Cary said. “There were no extra interior finishes, unless it’s in a very significant public space.”

The original bare-bones structure will retain its exposed elements, he said. His task was to make some of those building areas more “people-friendly.”

Charter Construction is the general contractor. Other project team members include Swenson Say Faget, structural engineer; Springline Design, civil engineer; Rushing, mechanical and electrical engineer; AGL Acoustics; 33 Design, interiors; and Swift & Co., landscape architect.

Completion is set for June of 2009.

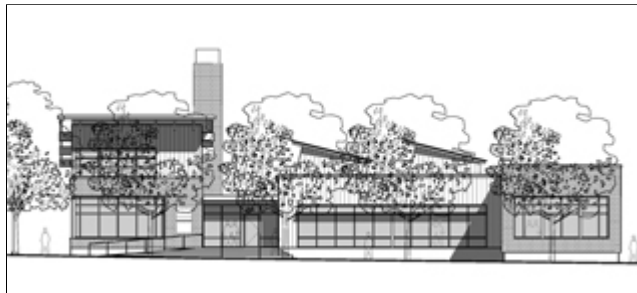


Image courtesy James Cary [\[enlarge\]](#)

One of the main green features of the new admissions and alumni space is that Seattle University will expand an existing building and keep most of the original bare-bones structure.

“It's not a large building,” Cary said, “but we designed it to have a significant presence on the street. The university has been very excited about it.”

There are several other projects in the works on campus.

The biggest is a \$56.5 million renovation and addition to the main library, set to begin next June. That project will add 35,000 square feet, bringing the total to 132,000 square feet. In the meantime, the university is renovating a 47,000-square-foot building at 13th Avenue and East Columbia Street for use as a temporary library. That \$12 million project is under way.

A \$10 million, 19,000-square-foot addition to the Connolly Center athletic facility is expected to begin in late spring. The Seaport Building, which will be used by the law school, will undergo a \$10 million renovation and addition project beginning next year.

“Enrollment has climbed significantly, putting pressure for classrooms, study space and housing,” Kerns said. “[These projects] give us capacity as we look into the future.”

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