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# The Gazette

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## Community center coming downtown

### ■ Church and nonprofit to work on Woodmont Triangle project

BY KATE S. ALEXANDER  
STAFF WRITER

A Bethesda church and the nonprofit Graceful Growing Together will use state money to help build an integrated church and community center in Woodmont Triangle.

Maryland lawmakers approved a \$150,000 earmark, known as a bond bill, for the project, which is expected to cost about \$24 million to \$26 million, according to Barry Lemley, president and executive director of Graceful Growing Together.

Since 1938, Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church has owned the down-

town Bethesda property where the community center will be built, Lemley said.

Graceful Growing Together is a nonprofit whose sole member is the church, Lemley said. The nonprofit has a 25-year lease to manage the center once it is built. The church will own the building and land.

Currently, the church has several buildings on its property. The buildings not only provide worship space, but have also housed community programs, a culinary arts incubator and community programs such as some Bethesda Cares' services. In total, Lemley said, the church has about 14,000 square feet there.

"We've always been a congregation

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## Henson home expansion project gets state funding

### ■ Property would become a historic and cultural park; house would be a museum

BY KATE S. ALEXANDER  
STAFF WRITER

The historic North Bethesda home of 19th-century abolitionist Josiah Henson will soon be open more

regularly as a historic park, with a museum and interpretive program focusing on Henson's life and slavery in Montgomery County. State funding is helping that expansion.

Maryland lawmakers awarded the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Montgomery County Department of

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## CENTER

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that shared its facilities as they were available," he said.

Roughly eight years ago, the church decided to not just share its facilities, but construct a new building that would "really embrace the needs of the community," Lemley said.

What it envisioned was a larger building that could house the church and also function as a community center with space for meetings, recreation, senior activities and a day care center, plus a theater and room for the programs that currently share its space.

Bethesda has no community center downtown that will provide what the Graceful Growing Together project would offer, Del. Marc A. Korman said.

Korman (D-Dist. 16) of Bethesda sponsored the bill to fund the project, with support from the entire District 16 delegation. In the Senate, Susan C. Lee (D-Dist. 16) of Bethesda was a sponsor.

"We want to grow around Metro stations, and I think that is great, but we need to make sure we are providing all types of infrastructure — not just school and roads, but community centers like this," Korman said.

The Graceful Growing Together project hits all of the marks for state support through a bond bill, Korman said.

To fund the lion's share of the project, the church plans to sell about half of its roughly 2-acre site to a developer to build 107 condos, Lemley said.

As part of the deal, the developer also will build the new community center at cost, with no markup. The parcel hasn't been sold, but is under contract, he said.

The church and Graceful Growing Together hope to break ground on the project in 2016 and be open by mid-2018, Lemley said. During construction, the church has an agreement with Imagination Stage to use space several blocks away, he said. Once built, he said, the community center will have seven levels and 64,000 square feet.

Lemley said that in the next few weeks, the church and Graceful Growing Together will hold public hearings with adjacent homeowners and other neighbors.

Lemley said his organization is considering asking the state in future years for more money through bond bills. The group asked for \$400,000 toward the project and received \$150,000.

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