

Redeemed: Seattle-Area Strip Club Becomes Christian Community Center

Formerly a strip club, a Seattle-area building that has been vacant for years will soon be redeemed when it becomes the new home of a church's offices and community center.

The building that belonged to Sugar's strip club in Shoreline, Washington, was once known for prostitution and was the front of a racketeering operation owned by the notorious Colacurcio family.

Five years after the building's former owners were indicted, Bethany Community Church has taken out a five-year loan on the property with an option to renew.

"We were looking for a permanent home where we could lead worship services, when we found this location," pastor Scott Sund told the *Seattle Times*. "We realized it wasn't a traditional space to be run by a church, but it just kept coming back to us, and we saw an opportunity to create something better for the community."

Sund says they plan to reopen the building this fall as offices and a church-run community center that will offer tutoring, social events and a coffee house for the neighborhood.

"When we arrived, this was a real place of darkness," he commented. "We hope we can bring a sense of light to the community in its place."

The government seized Sugar's in 2010 and it was sold to a Seattle-area family in 2011. The building owner turned down several other lease offers that "were going to use the space

in a similar way to Sugar's" before accepting Bethany Church's offer, Sund said.

The church entered the space the day before Easter and volunteers immediately began fixing it up and removing signs of the past.

"It was in really bad shape," Sund said. "They left in such a hurry they left old milk in the fridge. The air even still smelled like thick smoke.

"There were a few reminders of what was there before. Like in the DJ booth there were girls' names and the songs they were going to dance to. That is so heartbreaking. People make jokes about the mirrors and the poles, but the story is a tragic one to us."

Volunteers prayed on that day for Sugar's past and the building's future with the church.

"We don't want to focus on the past," Sund said. "We hope to fill it now with songs and prayers and joy."

He told KOMO News: "We prayed and then we sang and you talk about a building being reborn and we felt like it started right then."