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Orlando City Council backs UCF downtown campus



The Orlando City Council officially pledged \$75.2 million in land and other commitments to help UCF build a campus downtown. (Video from Fox 35 Orlando)



By **Stephen Hudak** · **Contact Reporter**

Orlando Sentinel

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City Council OKs deal for UCF downtown campus

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Taking up a top **UCF** priority, the Orlando City Council officially pledged \$75.2 million in land and other commitments Monday to help the school build a campus downtown.

The council's unanimous vote on the deal is critical to winning approval from the Board of Governors, which oversees Florida's public university system, said Marcos Marchena, chairman of UCF's board of trustees.

"The Board of Governors wanted to make sure that the city was fully committed to this project, and this action sends the message that the city is fully on board," Marchena said.

When the Board of Governors meets March 2, the downtown campus is the lone item on its agenda.

"We think that's a good sign," Orlando Mayor **Buddy Dyer** said. "But there's certainly nothing that we can take for granted as we move this process forward."



New rendering of UCF downtown campus released Monday (UCF)

Under terms of the deal, the city will turn over to UCF a 15-acre tract of land at Parramore Avenue and Livingston Street, property valued at \$20 million, and a \$22.5 million building on West Livingston Street that houses the Center for Emerging Media.

The city also will pay \$19 million to improve Livingston Street between Parramore and Terry avenues. A private developer also has committed \$7.7

million in property.

The proposed campus is expected to bring 7,700 UCF and Valencia College students downtown. UCF also hopes to get \$20 million in state funding from the Legislature.

UCF, which plans to tap its budget for \$20 million, is trying to raise \$20 million in donations. It has received \$9 million in pledges from other partners, including \$3 million from Orange County government, \$2 million from Valencia College, and \$1.5 million each from the Orlando Magic and CFE Credit Union. School leaders are confident they will raise the other \$11 million.

"Based upon the history of this community, [I am] very confident they're going to come together and see the positive impact that UCF downtown will have – not just on our students but on the community," said Fred Kittinger, associate vice president of university relations.

He cited past partnerships between UCF and the community that helped create business incubators and Medical City.

"For other communities this [project] might be a bridge too far For us it's just the next

step," Kittinger said.

In concept, the downtown campus would be a 15-minute walk from [Amway Center](#), the Lynx Central Station, Orlando City Hall, the [Orange County Courthouse](#) and the Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts and just one SunRail stop from two top-rated hospitals.

All those sites will boost the university's proposed "learning laboratory" downtown, Kittinger said.

Despite the hopeful view of UCF administrators, the Board of Governors has previously been skeptical, citing concerns that enrollment projections are too optimistic and there are other more important projects for campuses around the state.

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