

Clemson takes step in freeing up main campus

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CLEMSON — Clemson University has taken a step toward freeing up a portion of its main campus to increase green space, and spending nearly \$4 million to do so.

Last week, school trustees unanimously voted to approve up to \$3.75 million to acquire the former National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying (NCEES) building located at 280 Seneca Creek Road in Seneca. The property is also currently home to the school's Snow Family Outdoor Fitness and Wellness Center, where Y Beach is located.

The project was anticipated for in the 2017 Long-range Framework Plan conducted by the university.

"It's part of our overall strategy for moving support employees out of the core campus to the periphery," vice president of finance and operations Tony Wagner said Friday.

The building became available after the NCEES moved operations to Greenville in the middle of 2020. The building is owned by CULSF Two LLC, a subsidiary of the Clemson University Land Stewardship Foundation.

The proposed acquisition had been reviewed by members of the Finance and Operations Department and the Office of Land and Capital Asset Stewardship.

While the move by trustees might seem like a typical land acquisition, it signifies a step in returning 6.7 acres of Clemson's central campus to green space.

"Acquisition of the facility would allow the University to move non-core programmatic functions out of campus, opening up space for student-driven education, programs and functions," additional meeting agenda material said. "One of the poten-

tial users being the Facilities Division, which is currently located in the core of campus and other locations around campus."

Many of Clemson's facilities maintenance operations are stationed along Klugh Avenue and Alpha-Beta Circle, centered in the heart of campus.

In the 2017 framework plan, officials identified a future demolition of Johnstone Hall and the University Union for campus life, academic and/or housing. A new student union was also discussed in the document.

"The redevelopment in this district (West Neighborhood) offers significant opportunities to develop a series of special open spaces," the document said. "These open spaces will need to be designed to be multi-use, with areas near the new Union providing space for every-day activities such as outdoor eating and studying, as well as small-scale events on the new central lawn."

In the fall of 2019, trustees approved vacating and demolishing the University Union and Johnstone Hall.

Johnstone, one of Clemson's oldest residence halls, has been empty for more than three years. At the time, The Journal reported the total project would cost roughly \$21 million and would be paid for with state institution bonds. More than \$300 million in capital improvement projects around campus were paused late last year.

"The university continues to evaluate future capital projects as we navigate through the financial circumstances brought forth by the pandemic," university spokesman Joe Galbraith said in a statement to The Journal on Monday. "The administration will bring to the board for their approval any future capital projects."

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