

UWM raises ante on acreage for Innovation Park

Spinoffs will need space, Santiago tells supervisors

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The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's proposal for a new engineering school and research park would require buying some 83 acres of Milwaukee County Grounds property near Highway 45 and Swan Blvd., UWM Chancellor Carlos Santiago said Monday.

In a presentation before the County Board's Economic and Community Development Committee, Santiago said the campus' Innovation Park would need about 52 acres for a new, larger UWM Engineering School and adjacent research park.

The plan also will need about 18 acres for highway right-of-way and 13 acres of green space to buffer the campus' east side, Santiago said. The center of the property would be used for a cluster of buildings for the engineering school, to relieve its cramped quarters on the UWM campus, Santiago said.

Several buildings south of the school would be used for private spinoff and other research firms. The historic Eschweiler buildings and additional new buildings north of the proposed campus site would be renovated for restaurants, hotels and conference space, he said.

The 83-acre total is nearly 30 acres more than had been originally suggested for the project.

The additional acreage contemplated for the project would be intended to accommodate a new freeway exit, as well as the green space, county officials said.

County Supervisor Michael Mayo Sr. told Santiago that the county didn't want to provide "land that you can sell" to private interests. "Milwaukee County should have that right," Mayo said.

Retaining control of the land envisioned for the spinoff development is critical to the overall project's success, said Tom Luljak, a UWM vice chancellor.

Sale of those parcels would provide some of the money UWM hopes to raise to cover costs of the engineering school expansion, Luljak said.

Mayo, in an interview, said the county should retain and develop the property sought by UWM for a business incubator adjacent to the engineering school unless UWM pays top dollar.

"We've got to get our best buck," Mayo said.

County officials declined to publicly release a new appraisal done for the county, saying it would be used in negotiations. Earlier estimates put the value of the land at \$10 million to \$12 million.

Other supervisors praised the large-scale project, estimated to cost roughly \$149 million for the engineering school alone.

UWM is seeking state and private support to develop its Innovation Park, strategically located near the Medical College of Wisconsin, Children's and Froedtert hospitals and GE Healthcare.

Santiago also told supervisors that UWM was joining the Medical College of Wisconsin, Marquette University and UW-Parkside in applying for a major federal grant to support the medical college.

Santiago said the medical college's chances of winning the grant - worth some \$30 million - weren't good without the other institutions' involvement.

With the research partners, odds of winning the National Institutes of Health grant are good, Santiago said.