INTRODUCTION

Planning, Design and Construction first began to examine the need for a classroom and class lab and/or studio building in 2019 due to the significant instructional seat shortage on campus, now over 4,718 seats\(^1\), and based on consistent reporting by the colleges (BCOE, CHASS, CNAS) that current space is inadequate both in quantity and quality,

The formal programming process was launched in January 2021. Early in this effort, Lot 19 emerged as a potential site because of its central adjacency to the users UTLF is proposed to serve and its presumed ease of constructability. Additionally, the site would achieve important LRDP goals related to densification of East Campus, as well as enhancing the campus’ visibility along University Avenue and Canyon Crest Drive.

Based on these qualities, the PDC completed an analysis of Lot 19, as summarized below.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Programmatic Compatibility

The fundamental assumption upon which this site analysis is based is that the primary users of the proposed UTLF building will be Bourns College of Engineering (BCOE), College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHASS), and College of Natural and Agricultural Sciences (CNAS) faculty. These colleges make up the vast majority of undergraduate enrollment at UCR, while also requiring a variety of specialized teaching spaces such as laboratories and studios. They presently deal with both space quantity and quality constraints that prevent them from meeting existing demand for lab courses; anticipated enrollment growth over the LRDP planning horizon (2035) will further intensify the strain. Their combined needs make a strong case for constructing a facility that will provide specialized spaces to meet pedagogical need and allow for enrollment growth in the three most populated colleges on campus.

In addition to its proximity to general-assignment classroom space in University Lecture Hall (UNLH) and Student Success Center (SSC), the Lot 19 site proposed for UTLF affords the following programmatic adjacencies for the colleges:

BCOE:
- Near Materials Science Engineering (MSE) building, which is used for undergraduate instruction and features several class labs

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\(^1\) UCOP 2018 Analysis
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- Less than 5 min walk from the college’s home base in Bourns Hall.

CNAS

- Approximately 7-10 minute walk from existing class laboratory facilities in Physics, Pierce Hall / Science Lab 1, and Spieth / Life Sciences, making travel between building during class changes feasible

CHASS:

- Immediately adjacent to CHASS Interdisciplinary North & South, and Athletics & Dance, which are used for undergraduate instruction and feature class labs / studios
- Within a five-minute walk to other CHASS facilities with class lab and studio space, such as Arts and Watkins Hall

Constructability

The proposed site is currently used as Lot 19. Construction of the UTLF building would displace approximately 185 red permit spaces. However, Transportation and Parking Services has indicated that overall staff and faculty parking space utilization is significantly lower than pre-pandemic levels, which results in excess capacity. Further analysis is needed to ensure that displacing these spaces will not create undue parking challenges, but at this time PDC believes there is sufficient capacity such that users can easily be relocated to other lots.

A civil survey of the site was completed in 2017 confirming that the site is relatively flat (approximately 1% average slope East-West, and 1.7% North-South). This may afford some savings in site preparation costs. Additionally, the site has nearby access to all major utilities – electrical, domestic and chilled water, stormwater, and data/telecommunications. Capacity will be confirmed following site approval.

Environmental

This is a pre-disturbed infill site. PDC does not foresee any environmental concerns or limitations.

Planning & Design Considerations

The Lot 19 site is within the University Avenue Gateway land use designation of the 2021 Long Range Development Plan (LRDP), which emphasizes buildings in the 4-5 story range that engage the public and showcase campus priorities. Consequently, UTLF is considered a compatible use.

The site’s location near the intersection of University Ave and Canyon Crest Drive affords significant visibility and opportunity to create a clear “arrival” to this side of campus, as well as enhance the
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campus’ connection to the rest of the City– a goal of the LRDP.

Operational Considerations

The site is well served by parking nearby lots 22 and 1, which are both within a 5-minute walk. Disabled parking stalls are provided in both of these lots, however, the path of travel will need to be surveyed for compliance if it is determined that these parking stalls are to serve the site. Access to public transit is also conveniently located within a 5 minute walk – either at Bannockburn Village or on University / West Campus Drive intersection.

The site is served by existing emergency vehicle / service vehicle drive aisles accessed from North Campus Drive. How to balance service and delivery vehicle access with the future increased pedestrian circulation through these aisles as students travel to/from UTLF will warrant particular consideration during design.

Future Transit Center

Developing a bus transit center that would extend University Ave into campus and facilitate rider drop-off/pickup has long been a campus goal, although at this time it is unclear when funding for the project may become available. In anticipation of this project and in keeping with the vision for University Ave and Canyon Crest Drive, a landmark building of significant height and square footage, as well as suitable program is most appropriate for the Lot 19 site. Following site analysis, PDC concludes that UTLF presents the right opportunity to construct a building that will eventually become a highly visible gateway to the campus at the terminus of the anticipated transit center.

OTHER SITES CONSIDERED

PDC also examined the development potential of Olmsted Lawn and the undeveloped area immediately west of MRB. Although both sites can accommodate the assumed building footprint and offer relative ease of constructability, neither offer the same level of programmatic suitability as Lot 19. While Olmsted Lawn is within a 2.5 minute walk of existing CHASS and CNAS Labs, it is outside the 5 minute walking radius of most existing BCOE facilities. The vacant site east of MRB1 encounters similar trade-offs; it is close to existing BCOE facilities but further from CHASS facilities.

FINDINGS

This early analysis indicates that Lot 19 is a suitable site for the proposed UTLF building, with particular significance given to programmatic compatibility and design opportunities to advance the LRDP goals of placemaking, visibility/presence and connectivity.