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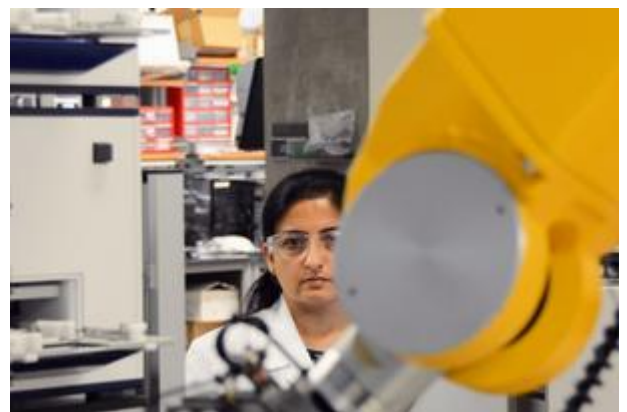
How UCF may breathe new life into former Sanford Burnham research facility

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It's bright and early in the morning, and cars are cruising along Lake Nona Boulevard as cows placidly graze on green pastures in the shadow of tall medical buildings.

A large field of tall grass sits vacant next to Sanford Burnham Prebys Medical Discovery Institute at Lake Nona, the GuideWell Innovation Center and the University of Florida's College of Pharmacy — but not for long. That's where the University of Central Florida and Nashville-based HCA Healthcare Inc. (NYSE: HCA) plan to build a teaching hospital in Lake Nona's Medical City, after waiting nearly a decade for approval.



JIM CARCHIDI

But there's still something missing between that future hospital and the existing medical school that would make it a true medical campus: a cancer research center.

And now, finally, plans are lining up to make that happen.

"It always has been part of our plan to expand research and research entities in Medical City as part of our efforts to create a national and, ultimately, global destination for medical education, research and patient care — a Johns Hopkins,

only better," UCF College of Medicine spokeswoman Wendy Sarubbi told *Orlando Business Journal*.

As far as UCF is concerned, the perfect place for those activities is the building that for years has housed the Sanford Burnham Prebys Medical Discovery Institute, which soon will be vacated as the nonprofit institute plans to pack up and head back to California.

In fact, what Orange County Mayor [Teresa Jacobs](#) recently characterized as a "colossal failure" for the region appears to be the perfect opportunity for UCF to create a connected medical campus that may help save lives.

And we're talking about lots of lives, because the American Cancer Society estimates 135,000-plus cancer cases in Florida this year, along with a projected death toll of 45,030.

Opportunity rising from the ashes

Nearly a decade ago, La Jolla, Calif.-based Burnham Institute for Medical Research — what it was called back then — opened an East Coast campus in Lake Nona's young Medical City. The expectation was that this big nonprofit research center would be a catalyst for a biomedical cluster in the southeast Orlando community, as well as create hundreds of high-wage jobs.

And a life sciences hub at Medical City did form, today housing upward of 5,000 jobs. But the institute in recent years struggled as grants from the [National Institutes of Health](#) and donations for research became scarce. "We saw Florida's philanthropy for biomedical research fail to materialize at the level we had anticipated," Sanford Burnham Vice President of Public Affairs Deborah Robison told *OBJ*.

So, the research institute two years ago announced it would leave Medical City to focus on its La Jolla operations. That decision that drew ire from state and local officials, since the institute in 2006 was approved for \$367 million in state and local tax incentives to set up shop here and create 300 jobs — something that never was fully realized.

However, Sanford Burnham's exit offers a prime chance for UCF. University officials want to transform the \$79.6 million, 173,476-square-foot facility into a National Cancer Institute-designated comprehensive cancer center through collaboration with organizations such as Knoxville, Tenn.-based Provision Healthcare LLC and HCA's Sarah Cannon Research Institute LLC.

All this will happen adjacent the site planned for the joint UCF/HCA Healthcare future teaching hospital, creating a walkable health campus that will serve as a training hub for medical students and seamless care for patients. "We are eager to create an academic cancer research and treatment center that will serve our community: patients, researchers, providers and taxpayers," UCF College of Medicine Dean Dr. Deborah German said. "Patients will be able to see scientists, get therapy and, should there be a need for hospitalization, they can walk to the hospital."

Rare cancer treatment planned

If UCF is successful in its bid for the Sanford Burnham assets, it very well could have an extraordinary impact on Central Florida and beyond.

Consider: This year, an estimated 266,120 new U.S. cases of invasive breast cancer will be diagnosed in women and 234,030 new cases of lung cancer, as well as 164,690 new cases of prostate cancer, according to the American Cancer Society. Another 10,600 new cancer cases will be diagnosed among children up to 14 years of age in the U.S. alone.

That's why UCF plans to work with the Sarah Cannon Research Institute to use the most advanced cancer therapy available, which may attract even more medical businesses to the area, German said.

UCF's cancer research division has a wide variety of cancer studies underway, including metastatic breast and prostate cancer; rapidly progressing pancreatic, lung, ovarian and head and neck cancers; specific cancers; how genetics impact cancer risks; and harnessing the immune system to fight cancer.

The new Lake Nona cancer center would complement that by offering clinical trials and including advanced pencil proton beam therapy, radiation therapy, imaging, clinical care and drug discovery.

Proton therapy is a radiation treatment. Locally, only two centers about 30 minutes from Lake Nona offer it: Orlando Health UF Health Cancer Center south of downtown and Provision Proton Therapy Center in west Orange County, which is expected to open by early 2019.

Meanwhile, pencil proton beam therapy can be found only at a handful of centers nationwide. It's a more precise treatment that relies on complex planning systems and intricate magnets to aim a narrow proton beam and essentially "paint" a radiation dose layer by layer, experts have said.

"Developing and delivering such cutting-edge treatment options in Medical City would be a very exciting prospect for the future," said Sanford Burnham President and CEO [Kristiina Vuori](#).

Further, UCF projects its plan will result in a \$578 million economic output after five years of operations. The center itself will create 302 high-wage jobs, paying anywhere from \$60,000 to \$600,000, and may even retain some Sanford Burnham researchers. Plus, the planned new Lake Nona cancer center likely would boost Florida's \$6 billion annual medical tourism, giving us a bigger piece of the \$100 billion global market.

"We are one step closer to our dream to create a life sciences cluster with a multiplier effect," German said.

In addition, the cancer center would provide UCF with 67,000 square feet of wet lab space for biomedical research. Wet lab space essentially is a laboratory with the appropriate plumbing, ventilation and equipment required to allow hands-on scientific research and experimentation.

Looking ahead

UCF's bid for Sanford Burnham's assets is especially appealing to Orange County, in part because the college will not seek state funds for the project. Instead, UCF proposes paying \$2 million in annual rent to the county by subleasing space to users/partners and generating more than \$3 million in new annual local taxes.

In contrast, Sanford Burnham's incentive package included \$155.3 million from the state; the county gave \$40.7 million; the city of Orlando provided \$32.7 million;

and Lake Nona developer Tavistock Group contributed \$17.6 million plus 12 acres of land.

But Sanford Burnham wasn't a complete failure. As a Medical City anchor tenant, it helped secure the medical school and attracted several other health care-related entities, said Orlando Economic Development Director Brooke Bonnett. "There's been a lot of success here with the Translational Research Institute in partnership with Florida Hospital, and that work is continuing. What we are interested in is making sure the life sciences research continues in that building, that work continues to help propel our community and that we continue to be on the map for life sciences research."

Picture this

UCF's proposed layout for Lake Nona cancer center

Floor 1: Advanced pencil proton beam therapy, radiation therapy, imaging and clinical care. The auditorium would be retained for educational and community uses.

Floor 2: Retain existing research space for cancer research. The administrative building would be modified and used for clinical trials, chemotherapy, infusion, immunotherapy and clinical care.

Floor 3: Basic and translational research, including precision medicine, stem cell therapy and drug discovery. Both the second and third floors would have wet lab space.

Collaboration

Partners step up

The University of Central Florida will have multiple partners physically present in the building, as well in Medical City.

Here's a look at the players:

UCF Academic Health Inc., a UCF-related organization that will lease the Sanford Burnham building from Orange County

Knoxville, Tenn.-based **Provision Healthcare LLC**, the partner bringing the pencil beam proton therapy to town, will provide an \$85 million-plus private investment.

HCA's Sarah Cannon Research Institute will develop and operate the clinical trials research center in the cancer center and manage comprehensive clinical trials.

Alter+Care, an Illinois-based developer of health care educational, research and clinical space, will handle renovations, redevelopment and financing.

Beyond these direct partners, the adjacent UCF Lake Nona Medical Center hospital — a joint venture between UCF and HCA — as well as Nemours Children's Hospital and the Orlando VA Medical Center will collaborate with the cancer center to provide a continuum of integrated, specialized and coordinated cancer services for Medical City patients and their families.

Having all those components of cancer care — clinical, education, research and commerce — together in Lake Nona is key, much like some of the most renowned and robust life sciences clusters throughout the world.

"While no two clusters are the same, they each have varying pieces of this pie," Tavistock Group Senior Managing Director Rasesh Thakkar told *OBJ*. "It's proven that health care and life sciences facilities in close proximity to one another will accelerate collaboration and innovation due to the synergies between complementary organizations. These synergies may similarly create the next great medical advances and research breakthroughs, perhaps in our very own backyard."

Timeline

Through the years

2006: Gov. Jeb Bush and the La Jolla, Calif.-based Burnham Institute for Medical Research announce planned Orlando expansion; state approves more than \$300 million in incentives for the institute's Florida expansion

March 2007: Burnham begins Florida operations in temporary space

October 2007: Groundbreaking held for its new Medical City facility

2008: Burnham and Florida Hospital establish the Translational Research Institute for Metabolism & Diabetes

April 2009: Burnham moves into its new Lake Nona building

October 2009: Burnham hosts official dedication and grand opening

2010: Institute changes name to Sanford-Burnham Medical Research Institute

2015: Name changes to Sanford Burnham Prebys Medical Discovery Institute

May 2016: Sanford Burnham announces it will leave Orlando; the University of Florida begins discussions regarding the transfer of the facility and equipment

October 2016: UF backs out of Sanford Burnham deal; state demands that research institute repay \$77.5 million in government incentives

November 2016: After Sanford Burnham responded to questions, the state decides not to pursue the \$77.5 million

August 2017: Sanford Burnham CEO Perry Nisen announces retirement

January 2018: Orange County commissioners hear competing proposals from the University of Central Florida and Florida Hospital to take over the facility's assets; Florida Hospital withdraws its proposal days later.

February 2018: Correspondence between Orange County Mayor Teresa Jacobs and Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer reveal they both favor negotiating with UCF to take over Sanford Burnham's local assets; Sanford Burnham agrees to return \$12.3 million in unused equipment funds

Sources: OBJ research; Sanford Burnham Prebys Medical Discovery Institute

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