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Medical College takes step toward development for central city initiative

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The Medical College of Wisconsin is proceeding with plans to develop a sizable facility in downtown Milwaukee or the city's near north side that will house an initiative "to help shape Milwaukee as one of the healthiest and safest cities in the nation."

The Medical College issued a request for proposals Tuesday evening seeking a company that will provide real estate planning and development services related to the project. Responses are due by Jan. 22.

"The vision for MCW's Center for Flourishing Lives initiative is to help shape Milwaukee as one of the healthiest and safest cities in the nation by understanding and addressing social determinants of health through civic engagement, education, research and policy change over the next decade," MCW senior vice president Greg Wesley says in the cover letter.

The Medical College plans to shepherd development of a 100,000- to 150,000-square-foot structure within the next 18 to 20 months, Wesley's letter says. The facility can consist of new construction or the renovation of a historic or modern structure, according to the request for proposals, which does not specify a dollar amount.

The request for proposals follows statements in November 2017 by Medical College president Dr. John Raymond in the Milwaukee Business Journal about envisioning a building downtown that would be MCW's community front door.

"This is the next step for the community front door," MCW spokeswoman Holly Botsford said Wednesday.

The genesis of the idea came from discussions Medical College officials held internally and with community leaders after the civil unrest in Milwaukee's Sherman Park neighborhood in August 2016, Raymond said. The Medical College, which has its main campus in west-suburban Wauwatosa, will not provide clinical care at the new facility, Raymond said.

Medical College leaders want the project to act as a catalyst to spur economic development in and around the new structure's location, according to the RFP.

The document shows a site-selection area that runs from Interstate 94 on the south to Capitol Drive on the north, North 27th Street on the west and either North Water Street or North First Street on the east. The target area for the initiative's services includes that zone as well as points to the east and the north that include some of the city's most impoverished neighborhoods.

The Medical College will select its project team by February. In March and April, the school plans to develop partnerships, hold civic engagement meetings and forums, perform conceptual programming and develop options for locations.

By May the college plans to select a preferred location, establish a budget and determine ownership of the facility. In June, the schedule calls for making a recommendation to the MCW board of trustees.



SCOTT PAULUS
Greg Wesley of the Medical College of Wisconsin

The new structure will include spaces for the Medical College's Office of Senior Associate Dean for Community Engagement, the Center for AIDS Intervention Research, the Center for Patient Care and Outcomes Research, the Institute for Health and Equity, and family medicine programs.

The initiative will complement the clinical and community work of MCW's health care partners Froedtert Health, Children's Hospital of Wisconsin and the Zablocki VA Medical Center.

"The physical building/development is less important than the potential impact on the surrounding area and the community," MCW says in an overview of the initiative.

Rich Kirchen
Senior Reporter
Milwaukee Business Journal

