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UA moves forward with plans for new law building

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University of Akron trustees took a step today toward building a new law school.

Trustees agreed to spend \$540,000 on design fees for a new building to be built across from the current one at University Avenue and Wolf Ledges Parkway.

The university would pay for the \$23.6 million building through \$10 million in donations and law school tuition revenues and \$13.6 million in state money.

"I believe it's 90 percent sure," said law school dean Martin Belsky. "We're very excited for the opportunity."

Plans call for the university to knock down the Buckingham Building, an aging, former train station that is home to the Pan-African Center for Community Studies, Office of Multicultural Development, Strive Toward Excellence program and classrooms. Those offices would move to the Administrative Services Building on East Mill Street.

The two-story, 95,600-square-foot law school would be built on the Buckingham site, and the current law school across the street would be demolished.

Ted Curtis, vice president for capital planning and facilities management, said the new building would be designed in the same style as many other newly constructed campus buildings — red-brown brick and stone.

Unlike other UA projects, the new building would be smaller than the one it replaces.

Curtis said the current, 120,000-square-foot building is inefficient because it is composed of an original building and an addition that connects it to West Hall.

He said the facility has a lot of wasted space in unneeded hallways and stairwells.

In addition, classrooms in the current building are not tiered to give students an optimum view of the front of the classroom and are too large. The heating and air-conditioning systems routinely malfunction, Belsky said.

The university could break ground in 18 to 24 months and finish construction a year or two after that, Curtis estimated.

But the new building and a related proposal — realigning a portion of Wolf Ledges Parkway — are not cast in stone.

The university has to come up with its share of the money before the building project could proceed.

The city of Akron would be responsible for finding the money to realign Wolf Ledges Parkway and improvements for traffic flow.

City Traffic Engineer David Gasper said he wasn't aware of the project and didn't know how much it might cost.

If Wolf Ledges is realigned, the university could fit two other buildings on the new law school property. If it's not, the new law school would fit in the existing space, Curtis said.

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