

\$220M of USF building could transform local health care

Premium content from Tampa Bay Business Journal by Margie Manning and Jane Meinhardt

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COURTESY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

A conceptual drawing shows the proposed rehabilitation center.

TAMPA — Two proposed medical buildings could change the face of Bruce B. Downs Boulevard as well as the health care delivery system in the Tampa Bay area.

A \$160 million **University of South Florida** rehabilitation science, engineering and medicine facility and the \$60 million Morsani College of Medicine would provide construction and employment opportunities, along with collaborative approaches to teaching and treatment designed to lower costs while improving quality of care.

No groundbreaking date is set for either facility. A \$20 million donation from philanthropists [Frank Morsani](#) and [Carol Morsani](#) is serving as seed money for the six-story medical college, which will be named in their honor, while the USF Foundation seeks additional donations to fund the building.

The 10-story, 350,000-square-foot rehab facility is envisioned as a public-private partnership between federal, state and local governments and entrepreneurs, although no one has yet committed funding to the project.

National recognition

The rehab facility would be a nationally recognized research center aimed at the rehabilitation and successful reintegration of veterans, said Lt. Gen. [Martin Steele](#) (USMC retired). Steele is co-chair of the USF Veterans Reintegration Steering Committee along with [Paul Sanberg](#), USF senior associate vice president for research and innovation.

It would fill a gap that exists on the national level and build on the strength of the work already under way at USF. The university was ranked in November as No. 5 among the country's most veteran-friendly schools by *Military Times Edge* magazine, up from No. 8 last year.

Early design plans call for at least three floors to be occupied by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, which potentially could consolidate 80,000-square-feet of leased space around the Bay area in the new building, Sanberg said during a meeting of the USF Board of Trustees Research, Innovation, Engagement and Job Creation Workgroup.

The James A. Haley VA Medical Center currently pays \$12 million annually to lease property outside its main hospital near the site of the proposed rehab research center.

Federal financial support for the center is likely, especially with the proximity of **MacDill Air Force Base** and the Haley VA hospital, but private sources also are included in possible funding options.

The rehab center and the Morsani medical college fit seamlessly into a concerted effort by USF, Florida Hospital Tampa, **Moffitt Cancer Center** and **Busch Gardens** Tampa Bay as members of the Tampa Innovation Alliance to brand and promote economic development in North Tampa.

Leveraging the Morsani name

The USF Foundation is not currently planning funding for the rehab facility, although it could eventually get involved with the project, said [Joel Momberg](#), chief executive of the USF Foundation and senior vice president of university advancement. The foundation is actively working on funding for the medical college.

[Frank Morsani](#), chairman and principal owner of Automotive Investments and one of the nation's most successful automobile dealers, already is reaching out to other potential donors, including wealthy individuals, foundations and corporations, Momberg said.

“The obvious advantage of having the Morsani name is that it represents quality, his commitment and his investment,” Momberg said. “It’s like a stamp of approval when Frank and Carol make an investment like that. They have given to organizations they know will follow through, that have innovative ideas and that they would like to attach their names to.”

The school will focus on team-based care and allow students in medicine, nursing, pharmacy, public health and physical therapy to learn together with an emphasis on personalized medicine. It will “transform the future of health care education and health care delivery,” said Dr. [Stephen Klasko](#), chief executive officer of USF Health and dean of the college of medicine.

It also creates several points of interest for additional naming opportunities, Momberg said.

The Morsanis’ latest gift increased their total donations to USF to \$43 million, including \$37 million to USF Health. The gift also pushed the foundation’s ongoing “Unstoppable” campaign over the \$520 million mark. The campaign, a comprehensive fundraising effort by USF, has a \$600 million goal.

A three-year suspension of a state-matching program for major gifts and facilities has hurt fundraising efforts but not mortally. The foundation raised \$111 million last year and expects to hit that mark again or surpass it this year, Momberg said. Donors who were struggling a year or two ago have since felt able to give again, he said.

“It’s great when philanthropists like the Morsanis say they feel comfortable about a nonprofit and invest in it and keep it going, not only for USF, but for all organizations,” Momberg said.

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