KU's plan for Central District will transform sleepy 19th and Iowa hillside into bustling neighborhood

Construction timeline is aggressive — three years

This conceptual drawing from the Kansas University Campus Master Plan shows what mixed-use development in KU's Central District might look like. The master plan calls for mixed-use development featuring student apartments and retail near the northeast corner of 19th and Iowa streets, where McCollum Hall and Stouffer Place will be razed. 

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This year’s shuttering and planned razing of McCollum Hall and Stouffer Place will leave the east slopes of Daisy and Irving hills a blank canvas.

Not for long.

Kansas University’s Campus Master Plan calls for transforming the sleepy, tucked-away hillside into a bustling neighborhood with mixed-use development, new science buildings, new student housing facilities and a multi-modal path. The area makes up a large portion of KU’s Central District, one of three districts the master plan divides campus into.

KU’s goal is to have the Central District vision realized — and all buildings constructed — in three years, according to university spokesman Joe Monaco.

“We want students to be able to live and work and study and recreate all right there,” he said.
"We also want to make 19th Street feel like it's more of a front door to campus."

Community members can hear more about plans for the Central District and see renderings at two upcoming public forums hosted by KU.

The first is scheduled for 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. Wednesday, July 29, in the Schwegler Elementary School gym, 2201 Ousdahl Road. A second forum is planned for 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. Aug. 24 in the Burge Union.

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KU holds such forums as part of its land-use agreement with the city of Lawrence.

“Public forums like these are a great way to have conversations with residents so we can all understand what KU will look like in the future,” Jim Modig, KU Design and Construction Management director and university architect, said in a recent KU news release. “As we said when we launched the Campus Master Plan in 2014, this is a special opportunity for us to transform the university into a national model and better position ourselves to serve the state and nation.”

KU’s Central District is bounded roughly by 19th Street on the south, Iowa Street on the west, 15th Street on the north and the Ambler Student Recreation Fitness Center on the east, according to the master plan. Also within it lie the Daisy Hill residence halls, the Burge Union, Allen Fieldhouse and Oliver Hall.

The Central District is sandwiched between the North District (the oldest part of campus, including Jayhawk Boulevard and Memorial Stadium) and the West District (everything west of Iowa Street).

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KU’s master plan calls for the following additions to the Central District:

• Integrated science buildings, potentially two or more of them constructed in multiple phases.

• Mixed-use development near the 19th and Iowa intersection, with multistory buildings featuring both retail and student apartments.

• Additional residence hall style student housing behind Oliver Hall.

• “Jayhawk Trail,” a pedestrian and bike path that would traverse all three districts, linking them as one campus.

• Green spaces throughout, including one tentatively dubbed Stouffer Green.

• An addition to the Burge Union.

• Architectural features to accentuate entry points into campus.

The master plan also accounts for infrastructure, power supply, stormwater management and parking, both surface and garage, Monaco said.

Funding details have not been finalized, but Monaco said KU is looking to a combination of sources, including philanthropy, business partnerships and public-private partnerships.

“We realize we have to be creative in terms of how we pursue projects like this, and we can’t necessarily count on funding
from the state," Monaco said. "We are pursuing alternative revenue streams."

Some pieces of the Central District plan already are in motion.

Central District redevelopment will kick off with groundbreaking for the new Earth, Energy and Environment Center — EEEC for short, it’s an expansion to Lindley Hall — late this summer or early fall, Monaco said. Though EEEC is technically located within the master plan’s North District, it’s just across Naismith Drive and thus considered a bridge to the Central District.

Earlier this month, KU presented integrated science buildings to the Kansas Board of Regents as the university’s top budget enhancement request for fiscal year 2017, in hopes of securing state funding for a portion of their construction.

The EEEC and proposed science buildings are part of a broader concept called Innovation Way, linking science facilities campuswide to foster interdisciplinary teaching and research, according to the master plan.

Stouffer Place closed for good June 30. The 25-building apartment complex, opened in 1957, housed primarily students with families and some international students.

McCollum Hall is scheduled to be demolished Nov. 25. Oswald and Self halls — the two new Daisy Hill residence halls replacing McCollum — will open to students this fall.