

Hartford Times Building Backed For UConn Campus Relocation

By **KENNETH R. GOSSELIN**
The Hartford Courant

The University of Connecticut has chosen the former Hartford Times building as the site of its downtown Hartford campus, attracted by the building's central location in the city, sources said Monday.

UConn hopes to move its West Hartford campus there in 2016 or 2017.

Sources familiar with the university's thinking said that UConn will now negotiate an agreement with Front Street developer HB Nitkin Group, which proposed the site for the relocation. The building is part of the Front Street district, and Nitkin has development rights. The state already owns the Times building.

If a final agreement is reached, UConn's board of trustees must approve the deal. UConn could reconsider other sites if the full board does not back the Times building.

The campus is expected to bring 2,200 students and 300 faculty and staff members downtown, a significant boost to a city struggling to increase foot traffic beyond the 9-to-5 workday.

The long-vacant Prospect Street building was selected from a field of 13 potential sites in the downtown area. Other finalists included One Talcott Plaza, just north of Capital Community College, and 2 acres on Allyn Street now used for parking, one source said.

Stephanie Reitz, a UConn spokeswoman, declined to comment Monday afternoon, saying that negotiations were continuing.

A source said that UConn was attracted to the iconic presence of the 1920s, Beaux-Arts-style structure, and its close proximity to the library, the Wadsworth Atheneum, city hall and the Old State House.

See more photos of the Times building [here](#).

The university wanted a location that wasn't right next to a highway. The idea is that students will patronize restaurants, cultural venues and entertainment attractions, and not just park, attend classes, and drive out of the city.

The building also is close to offices where students work in internships in public policy and



The rear portion of the Hartford Times building on Prospect Street would be demolished and replaced with a larger addition for a new UConn campus in the city.

Photo by Kenneth R. Gosselin/kgosselin@courant.com

social work, two major disciplines at the campus in West Hartford. One source said that UConn believes there will be ample parking, including some that would be constructed on the Times site.

When UConn announced last year that it would move its West Hartford campus, it was expected that the relocation could take place by the end of 2013. But renovations will need longer than that, and a source said the move will probably not be complete until 2016 or 2017.

The source said it has not been determined how much renovations to the 1920s edifice would cost. It is expected that the rear portion of the structure will be demolished and an addition will be built.

In addition to the relocation, the university's business school on Constitution Plaza would be consolidated in the renovated Times building.

City officials favored the selection of Talcott Plaza, hoping that it would jump-start redevelopment in the area just north of downtown. At one point, the city had proposed the downtown campus be located on city-owned land in the same area.

Maribel La Luz, a spokeswoman for Hartford Mayor Pedro E. Segarra, declined to comment on the selection of the Times building because negotiations were not complete.

"We're happy that their new home will be in Hartford, however, we look forward and expect to discuss the mayor's site preference, thinking and desires with President Herbst, the site screening committee and the board of trustees before the final decision is made," La Luz said. Susan Herbst is UConn's president.

The Capital Region Development Authority did not take a formal vote on which site it favored. But CRDA's executive director, Michael W. Freimuth, said Monday that all three sites had pluses.

The Allyn Street site, owned by Tishman Realty & Construction, was close to CRDA housing projects, the XL Center and the route of the busway, Freimuth said.

But the selection of Front Street will complete "a decade-long investment" in the city and make use of parking at the convention center and elsewhere that isn't being fully used, Freimuth said.

The Times building has been vacant for more than a decade, but both UConn and the Thomas Hooker Brewery Co. had proposals for the structure.

The edifice is dominated by six, soaring Ionic green granite columns and a terra-cotta cornice salvaged from the demolition of a church in New York. After The Hartford Times newspaper folded in 1976, the building was used for corporate and city offices.

The state paid \$8 million for the property in 2000 to make it part of the Adriaen's Landing project, which includes the Connecticut Convention Center, Marriott Hartford Downtown and the Front Street entertainment district. The Times building previously had been targeted for apartments.

Late last year, UConn said it had decided to relocate its Greater Hartford branch to downtown Hartford, rather than invest \$25 million in the university's aging campus in West Hartford. UConn also said that it wanted to build on its modest presence in the city and contribute to the revitalization of downtown Hartford.

Initially, it appeared that the university favored the former Travelers Education Center on Constitution Plaza. The UConn Board of Trustees authorized spending \$243,000 to study that location. The university has declined to release the study's results.

In January, UConn widened its search and later drew more than a dozen proposals. Throughout the selection process, UConn did not identify any of the sites under consideration, only indicating that it was seeking more information on a "handful." Some of the locations did leak out, however, and were identified in news reports.