



UTAH SYSTEM OF
HIGHER EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

December 1, 2023

University of Utah – Non-State Funded Project

[Board Policy R702, Non-State Funded Projects](#), requires the Board to review capital projects requiring Division of Facility and Construction Management (DFCM) or Legislative approval. [Utah Code 63A-5b-401](#) defines capital projects with more than \$5,000,000 of renovated space as “capital developments” and allows DFCM to approve those projects without legislative approval if the project does not use state funding sources for the design, construction, operation, or maintenance of the facility.

In the August Board meeting, the University of Utah requested approval to proceed with the design of the new baseball stadium. It passed unanimously with the accompanying requirement that the University return to the Board for approval for the construction of the entire project. The University of Utah is now requesting Board approval to construct a new baseball stadium on the site of the current practice field. The University has been utilizing the Smith Ballpark, owned by Salt Lake City, but with the announcement of the Salt Lake Bees being relocated to Daybreak, the city intends to redevelop the existing site, which provides an opportunity to bring the university’s team to campus. The stadium will include seating for 1,200 spectators, along with ticketing, restrooms, concessions, and merchandise areas, with team facilities that include lockers, showers, and other support and training spaces.

The proposed project budget is \$35M and will be funded by donations. Athletic revenues will fund operations and maintenance costs. No state funds will be used for this project, and no additional state funds will be requested for the operation and maintenance of this facility. The project was approved by the University of Utah Board of Trustees in the April 5, 2023, meeting. Additional information about the project is provided in the attached letter and presentation materials.

Commissioner’s Recommendation

The Commissioner recommends the Board authorize the University of Utah to obtain approval for the construction of the new baseball stadium on the site of the current practice field and refer to DFCM for final approval.

Attachment

October 31, 2023

Mr. Geoffrey Landward, Interim Commissioner
Utah System of Higher Education
Two Gateway
60 South 400 West
Salt Lake City, UT 84101-1284

Subject: Approval to Construct New Baseball Stadium

Dear Interim Commissioner Landward:

The University of Utah requests approval to construct a new baseball stadium on the site of the current practice field. The University has been using the Smith Ballpark owned by Salt Lake City for its games. With the Salt Lake Bee's announcement that they will be relocating to Daybreak, Salt Lake City has announced its intention to redevelop the site of the Smith Ballpark and it will no longer be available for University use. This provides an opportunity to bring the University's team to campus.

The stadium will include seating for 1,200 spectators along with ticketing, restrooms, concessions and merchandise areas. Team facilities include lockers, showers and other support and training spaces. It also includes press / media spaces and provide for broadcasting capabilities. Lighting and sound systems will be designed to minimize impacts outside of the stadium. Parking will be addressed through existing University lots near the site with the impact further mitigated by the low-traffic- times of the games. Additional information is included in the attached presentation.

The proposed total project budget is \$35,000,000 and will be funded by donations. Athletics revenues will fund operations and maintenance costs. No state funds will be used for this project nor will they be requested for operations and maintenance costs or future improvement needs.

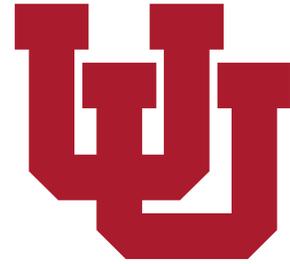
This project was approved by the University's Board of Trustees in their meeting on April 5, 2023. On August 10, 2023, the Board of Higher Education authorized the project to proceed through design with a requirement that it return for further approval before proceeding with construction. We request that this be presented to the Board of Higher Education for approval at its meeting on December 1, 2023.

Thanks, as always, for your consideration and support.

Sincerely,



Cathy Anderson
Chief Financial Officer



Proposed Utes Baseball Stadium

Board of Higher Education
December 1, 2023

An Important Project

With the Salt Lake Bees' announcement of their upcoming relocation to Daybreak, the need to bring the University of Utah's Baseball team to campus is greater than ever.

The Bees will finish their last season at Smith's Ballpark in the Fall of 2024, making future access to the Ballpark for the Utes uncertain.



Athletics on Campus

There are two areas where Athletics facilities are concentrated, allowing the share of support and training facilities:

1. Central Campus

- Basketball
- Soccer
- Lacrosse
- Ski Team
- Track & Field
- Softball
- Swim/Dive
- Gymnastics

2. Guardsman Way

- Baseball
- Football
- Golf
- Tennis



Proposed Space Program

Seating (19,003 SF)

- 1,200 seating capacity (bench, chair-back, loge box, table, berm, party deck, and berm seating)

Spectator Support (18,905 SF)

- Ticketing, restrooms, concessions, merchandise, circulation

Team Facilities (11,479 SF)

- Lockers, showers, lounge, nutrition, meeting, video, training, medical, equipment storage, coaches space, visiting team restrooms

Stadium Support (6,692 SF)

- Dugouts, field toilets, field-access tunnel, umpire support, mascot, weather station replay, storage

Practice/Warm-up (9,300 SF)

- Indoor batting/pitching cages

Press/Media (1,287 SF)

- TV and Radio broadcast space, food area, toilets

Operations Support (7,241 SF)

Outdoor Areas (149,186 SF)

- Playing field, bullpens, entry plazas, kids' zone



Site Considerations & Mitigations

With construction of this new facility, the University will address the concerns of our neighbors in the surrounding community:

Safety

- Netting will be installed to stop foul balls

Noise

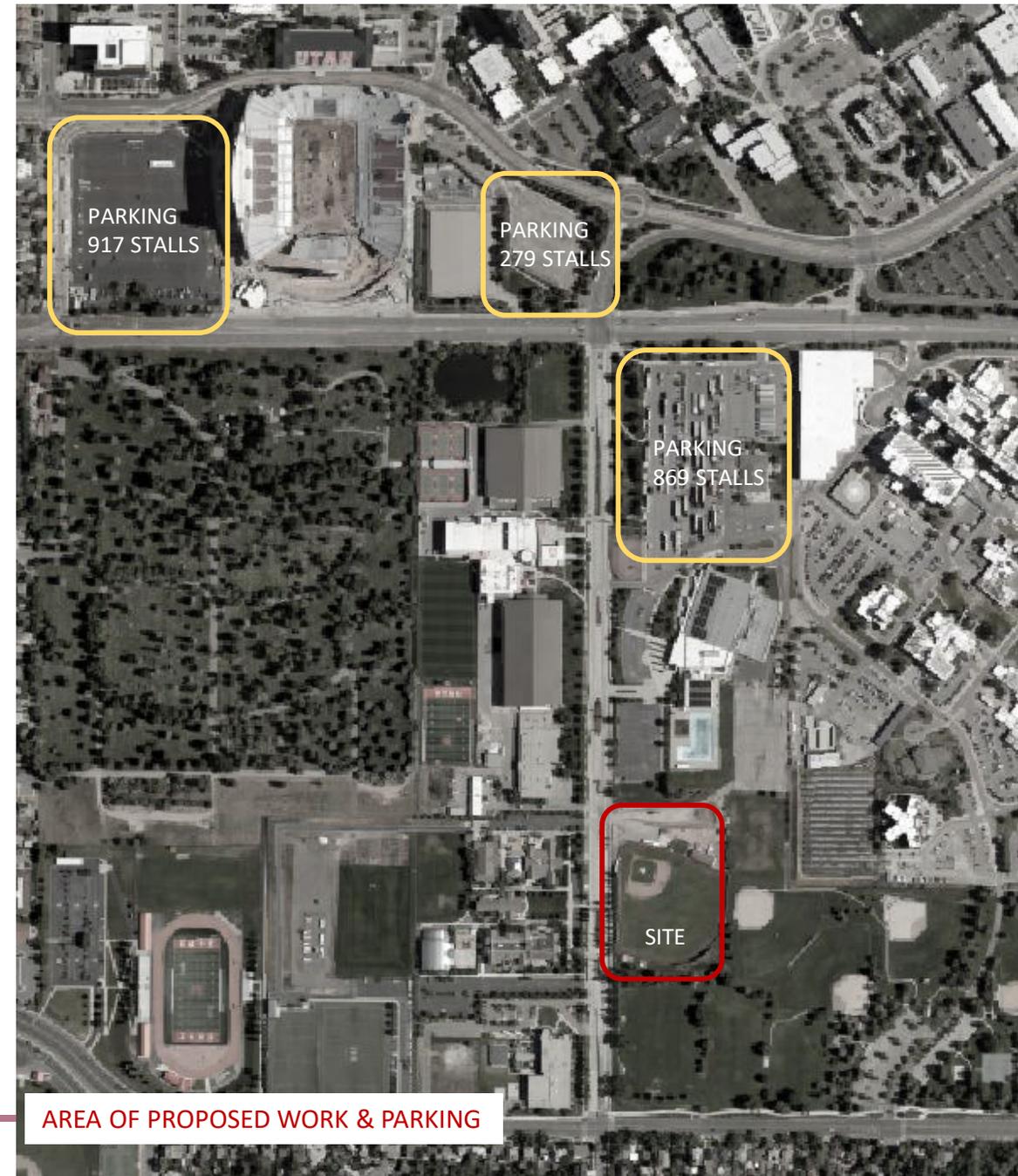
- Berms at the outfield will help contain noise
- A modern, distributed audio system will focus sound into the stadium

Field Lighting

- Lighting will be designed to not spill beyond stadium

Traffic & Parking

- Games will occur at low- traffic times (evenings/weekends)
- Parking will be available at adjacent campus lots:
 - Guardsman Way Lot: 869 Stalls
 - Stadium Lots: 1,196 Stalls



Conceptual Rendering



Proposed Budget and Schedule

Budget

- Construction \$29M
- Soft Costs \$ 6M
- Total Project \$35M

Schedule

- Approvals:
 - April 2023: University Board of Trustees Approval
 - August 2023: Board of Higher Education Approval for Design
DFCM Approval
 - *December 2023:* *Board of Higher Education Approval for Construction*
- Design & Construction
 - April 2023 – March 2024: Programming & Design
 - April 2024 – Dec. 2025: Construction



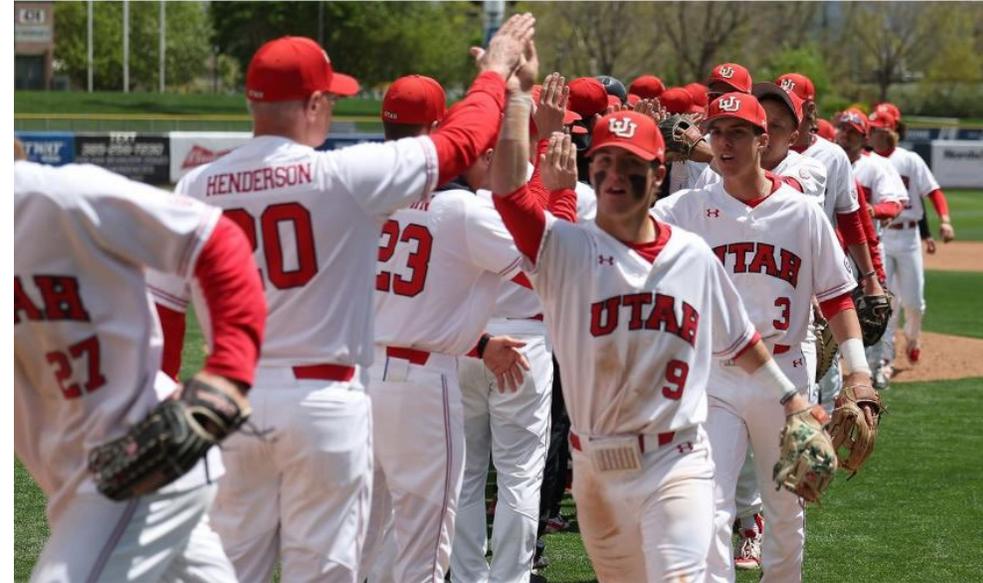
Request for Approval

Request approval to construct a new baseball stadium on the site of the current baseball practice facility on Guardsman Way.

Project Budget: \$35,000,000

Project Funding Source: Donations and Institutional Funds

No State O&M is requested



Thank You!



October 24, 2023

UBHE Commissioner Geoffrey Landward
and UBHE Board Members

Dear Commissioner Landward and UBHE Members:

We represent neighborhoods and residents who will be impacted by the University of Utah's proposed \$35 million baseball stadium in Sunnyside Park. Below is a detailed explanation of our position, but first, we'd like to present two requests for your consideration:

- Pause any forward movement on the stadium until alternative locations have been seriously explored and considered. The Board's next meeting is December 1. The U of U has already indicated no construction will commence until the spring of 2024 so your investigation could extend to your March 21, 2024 meeting.
- Allow us to address the board at your November 3 meeting.

Our position:

We support the U's quest for a new stadium, but don't support the location on Guardsman Way. We acknowledge the U owns the land – a free gift given to them via a land patent in the 1990s. But we received direct promises from a University of Utah Vice President in 2018 that the University would never build a stadium on that property – after a failed attempt in 2017. Despite the community's longstanding and clearly-communicated interests about this site, the University made the stadium announcement on April 11, 2023, blindsiding residents. The University exists within a residential community, and we believe its responsibilities are not only to its students and faculty but also to its Salt Lake City neighbors. This lack of public involvement is damaging town-gown relationships. We also acknowledge that the University has said it was pushed into a corner because of the departure of the SLC Bees from the Ballpark stadium. Nonetheless, the U of U has had sufficient time to identify another location. Since April, the community has taken a proactive stance and initiated a number of meetings with University officials, sports directors, trustees and city leaders to forge a compromise, without success. With 1,500 acres – and more that will be added from the Fort Douglas deal – we think the University should seriously consider and select an interior property near their existing spring sports fields.

Our urgency:

The baseball stadium issue is just a microcosm of how neighboring communities *are* being impacted and *will be* impacted by this and future University expansion plans. We have growing concerns that the spread of University facilities into adjoining stable, cohesive and quality neighborhoods could lead to unintended consequences and deterioration. We urge the UBHE to exercise greater oversight.

We have already experienced evidence of neighborhood decline

- Hundreds and thousands of fans clogging our narrow streets with their cars during football game-days, concerts and moto-cross events in Rice-Eccles Stadium. Our communities have become default auxiliary parking lots for fans.
- A double-whammy: Rowdy game-day parties west and north of the University with loud noise, open consumption of alcohol, and beer-pong contests. And something new — continuous “rages” that last until early morning with up to 700 people drinking, using drugs, defecating on lawns, and damaging property. And residents are leaving – home ownership in Central East has dropped to a shocking 26%!

- Gradual conversion of our housing stock from owner-occupied to student-renter occupied. This involves violation of laws that prohibit more than 3 unrelated people from living in the same house, as well as the aforementioned parties and loud noises late at night. In Central East there is a new phenomenon of “rental housing crowding” with as many as 6-12 students per unit, including mattresses across the floors of the living rooms and dining rooms.
- State-owned, higher density student housing along the Sunnyside Avenue corridor and elsewhere that is impacting our parks, libraries, and neighborhood streets. The U of U has announced plans to build 5,000 more housing units. These students and families drive cars and only half of them will be accommodated in campus parking spaces. Sunnyside Park will also be the most geographically convenient place for them to recreate.
- Construction crews working on another U project were utilized to remove 1.6 acres of open space at This Is the Place Heritage Park to create a 215-car parking lot. There was no prior public engagement or announcement of the nearby Sunnyside East community.

Why the proposal will exacerbate the neighborhood decline:

- During 2022-23, the U of U made two separate requests to the city to acquire additional land in Sunnyside Park for the stadium. Both requests were denied. They wanted more property in left field to make the stadium less homerun friendly (estimates: 40-100 additional feet). In exchange, the University would make about \$2 million in improvements to the park. The community has vehemently maintained that this is another conspicuous reason the location is ill-suited for a full-fledged stadium. Without additional land, the University proposes a monster 30-foot wall in left field.
- We understand that the University’s quest for more land has not been extinguished. Regrettably it reflects a serious misunderstanding of what public parks are for and the **intrinsic environmental, aesthetic, and recreational benefits** they provide – in a democratic way -- to cities. They were never intended to be a bargaining chip for encroachment by powerful institutions or monied groups.
- If built, the baseball stadium represents a southward incursion into an area that has traditionally been neighborhood-centric – Pre-K through 12th grade schools, a public recreational center, a city park and houses of worship.
- In 2017, experts and top leaders from more than a dozen city and state agencies – including the University of Utah -- created the **East Bench Master Plan (EBMP)**. This plan calls for the U of U practice field to become part of Sunnyside Park. It was never intended for a stadium. When we recently informed the University of the EBMP, their cavalier response was “these people don’t work here anymore” even though a high-ranking Vice President was among those who approved it.
- The build-out of a 1,200-seat stadium with dozens of amenities, offices, concessions, etc., will bring substantially more impacts to adjacent neighborhoods – not just during baseball season – but year-round. The University has already signaled plans to use the space for football tailgating parties and other events to recoup costs. It will be a “rent-a-thon.”

We respectfully request your immediate action to delay this development and recommend to the University of Utah locate the stadium at a more suitable location.

Respectfully,

Eric Dyer, Yalecrest Neighborhood Council Board Officer, on behalf of the full YNC board; the Sunnyside East Association; Friends of Sunnyside Park representing 300+ petitioners; the East Central Community Council; the Central Ninth Community Council and David Leta, East Bench Community Council resident.