[Tulane to expand downtown campus with research-focused renovation](#)

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bbronst@tulane.edu

The Hutchinson Memorial Building is aglow in Tulane green during a ceremonial lighting celebrating Tulane's historic transformation of the downtown campus. (Photo by Tyler Kaufman)

Tulane University continues to expand its footprint in the heart of New Orleans with its largest downtown project to date — renovation of the Hutchinson Memorial Building, home to the Tulane School of Medicine since 1930.

Plans call for a complete redo of the building's seventh floor, which will include additional and renovated research lab space, support labs, offices and conference spaces. The $35 million project will provide room for 20 new research principal

investigators, or leaders of research projects, and their research teams. A smaller renovation on the fifth floor will provide space for two to three more principal investigators. The project is scheduled for completion in 2025.

"We've been growing our research for the last seven or eight years, but this will allow us to do even more of that in state-of-the-art lab space," said Dr. Lee Hamm, senior vice president and dean of the School of Medicine.

Workers are in the process of "selective demolition," which allows for the salvaging of materials for possible reuse, recycling or repurposing.

The centerpiece of the renovation is on the seventh floor, a 50,000-square-foot space that will be transformed into a contemporary lab suite to meet the exponential increase in research underway at Tulane. The renovation is the first new major downtown project focused exclusively on research in nearly a decade. It will join the J. Bennett Johnston Building next door and eventually the Charity Hospital building as Tulane's premiere downtown buildings dedicated to discovery and innovation.

In expanding Tulane's downtown presence, President Michael A. Fitts aims to establish the university as a research and innovation powerhouse while attracting biotech businesses and fostering discovery in New Orleans and the surrounding region.

"The American landscape is filled with success stories of cities that have been revitalized and reimagined by the presence of a major research university in their urban center," Fitts said. "This is our vision for Tulane and New Orleans."

The Charity building serves as the anchor for this historic transformation that will serve as a once-in-a-generation boon to Tulane's biomedical and academic research mission while diversifying the New Orleans economy and creating a surrounding neighborhood that draws researchers and scholars as new residents.

Patrick Norton, senior vice president and chief operating officer at Tulane, said Hutchinson is the first of several major downtown projects centered around research. Until now, its seventh floor had been divided among instructional, lab and office space.

"With the substantial 5th and 7th floor renovations, we are well on our way to remaking Hutchinson into a research-only facility for the School of Medicine," he said.

The floor will include an area for researchers to work on writing reports and another hangout space conducive for collaboration and brainstorming.

"Good innovation happens when people bump into each other," Norton said, referring to it as the "bumpability" factor. "The more access you have to that in a lab, the better. You want that hangout space where people are talking about their work and talking about their research. That's where innovation happens."

In the meantime, some researchers will be working out of the Tulane Medical Center building across the street. The fourth floor of that building recently underwent a renovation that provides lab space for five principal investigators along with office space and core facilities.

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