

# Clovis becomes new focus of medical school plans by Assemi family

By Marc Benjamin  
mbenjamin@fresnobee.com

The Assemi family, which had [planned to build a medical school near Millerton Lake](#), has changed its mind and now hopes to anchor its health sciences university on land near Clovis Community Medical Center.

The family, which represents one of the area's leading developers under the name Granville Homes, has acquired or assembled about 70 acres in the [Research and Technology Park](#) in north Clovis.

The sites, which stretch across three-quarters of a mile, will create space for 15 to 20 years growth, said Tom McLaughlin, director of planning for [California Health Sciences University](#).

Granville Homes officials made their interest in Clovis official Monday night, telling Clovis City Council members they are ready to build their medical school north and west of the Clovis Community Medical Center campus.

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For now, plans are for 426,000 square feet of classroom space, 100,000 square feet for library and administration, and 300,000 square feet of student housing.

"The ultimate size of the campus is fluid," McLaughlin said.

The campus eventually could have 2,000 to 3,000 students and a faculty and staff of 300 to 400. Work could begin as early as next year.

If the project moves ahead as planned, a new campus for its existing pharmacy school will open near the southwest corner of Alluvial and Temperance avenues in 2019. The other sites, east of Temperance and west of Locan Avenue, will house other schools, possibly for optometry, allied health (which includes a physician assistant school), dentistry or medicine.

"It will depend on the community's needs," McLaughlin said.

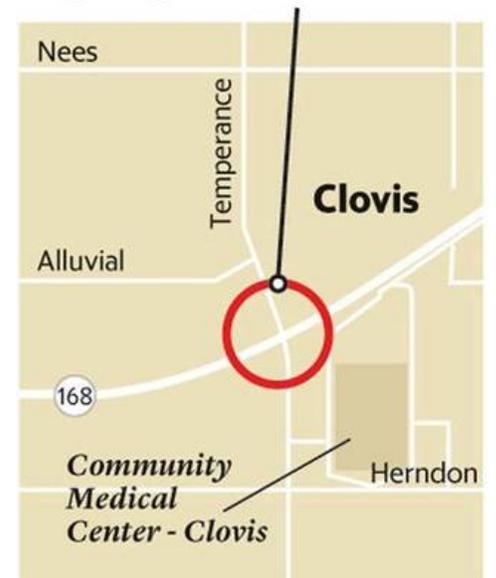
In the meantime, the California Health Sciences University pharmacy school will remain near the corner of Sierra and Clovis avenues along with an annex and clinic with a pharmacy. When fully expanded, the sites near Clovis and Sierra will cover 49,000 square feet.

Generally, universities are great economic engines for a community. It gives us a chance to become the intellectual and technological capital of the Valley.

Lynne Ashbeck, Clovis City Council member

Once the pharmacy school moves to its new site, the campus at Clovis and Sierra will serve as "an incubator" for new schools to build a student body until each is large enough to move into the new complex.

**Med school**  
*Developer Darius Assemi would like to create a medical school complex on several properties at Temperance Avenue and Highway 168 in Clovis.*



The Fresno Bee

McLaughlin said the university will provide opportunities to Valley students seeking careers in medicine and maybe those who come to Clovis from outside the Valley will decide to stay and start their medical careers here.

The university originally was planned in 2012 near Millerton Lake. Granville had owned the land for several years and its 179 acres offered land with open space amenities, but the timeline to build the campus was too long, the university said in a statement. The Assemi family also looked at sites in Fresno and Madera County.

But Clovis has had its Research and Technology Park zoned and plumbed for utilities, making it “shovel ready,” McLaughlin said.

In addition, the Clovis site is close to services for students and within walking distance of nearby medical facilities – Clovis Community Medical Center is south of Highway 168. He also said the city’s trail and the campus setting will allow the school to build green space into the complex.

Clovis’ “research and technology park” zoning includes schools and universities as allowable uses, said Dwight Kroll, the city’s planning director.

The project could be approved through city staff review without going to the City Council as long as it meets the city’s development standards and design guidelines, he said.

Councilwoman Lynne Ashbeck said development of the medical school would be a “great opportunity” for Clovis.

“Generally, universities are great economic engines for a community,” she said. “It gives us a chance to become the intellectual and technological capital of the Valley.”

Marc Benjamin: [559-441-6166](tel:559-441-6166), [@beebenjamin](https://www.instagram.com/beebenjamin)