

Community Memorial Health System Builds New Acute Care Flagship Facility

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Ventura County has seen a lot of activity recently in midtown Ventura where Community Memorial Health System is building a six-story plus basement replacement for Community Memorial Hospital. CMHS, a California non-profit public benefit corporation, has chosen

to build its new \$280 million seismically compliant hospital adjacent to the existing facility on its 11.5-acre campus. The hospital's two wings will encompass more than 325,000 net square feet, making it 60 percent larger than the current building.

Tom Jeffry of Arent Fox worked closely with CMHS General Counsel. Jeffry has deep experience in

the development and construction of health facilities and has worked with CMHS on the various financial and legal issues leading up to development. According to him, "The objective wasn't to change the overall scope of services so much as to right-size it to the needs of the community, looking at both the present and the projected needs." The hospital will continue to provide the



Artist's Rendering of the New Community Memorial Hospital

same extensive specialty and acute care services as it does currently, but will take it up a notch. The new 250-bed facility will have advanced diagnostic capabilities, 10 state-of-the-art surgical suites, an expanded ED, a dedicated Pediatric Care Unit, additional Heart Catheterization Labs, expanded Intensive Care and Cardiac Care Recovery Units, and a larger Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.

Jeffrey also spoke to the impact the economic situation has had on the project, “The recent financial market posed some challenges, particularly due to the size of the project. Traditional financing means, such as HUD, wouldn’t allow for the design-build model.” The loan proved too large for Cal-Mortgage (a division of OSHPD) to insure. CMHS, which eventually went through the traditional bond market with Merrill Lynch as the underwriter, had determined that the design-build model was the most efficient means for their project. Jeffrey briefly explained the design-build benefits, “The owner provides the budget and the objectives to the design-build contractor, and then they work together within that budget. Everyone’s at the table together, so it’s much quicker and more flexible in terms of achieving results.”

Working with the largest design-build firm in the country, Hospital Building & Equipment Company (HBE), CMHS hopes to avoid the “nasty surprises” often occurring with design-bid-build construction

projects. CMHS and HBE (which has a strong success record in California) have designed a patient-centered acute care facility, drawing feedback from the community through focus groups and community presentations.

John Oden, Community Memorial Hospital’s Director of Project Management, shared information on the design process, “The final design was a result of community participation – the city, neighboring businesses, residents – all gave input to augment our original ideas. They really wanted more green area, which resulted in opening up some city and district parking space into a park area.” Thanks to some property swaps to provide more open space, the building’s surrounding landscape will provide not only public park area, but also private, meditative space for patients and families. Maintaining such a natural, open space also minimizes the project’s environmental impact, which is a priority for the organization.

Interestingly, sustainability measures received a boost simply from the fact that CMHS is building on an established site rather than a “green” site. “We are proceeding with LEED standards in mind, and we are already having less impact to the environmental footprint due to location,” said Oden. They’re at a 96% recycle rate for the demolition work – concrete, asphalt and detritus from the buildings. In fact, the existing hospital will be “reused” as medical offices and support services

once the new building opens. Moving forward, the design calls for use of environmentally friendly interior finishes and sustainable materials.

When it comes to efficiencies, the design groups clinical care functions and space to optimize operational efficiencies, as well as staff and patient flow. Oden explained, “We looked at both vertical and horizontal transportation. Complementary specialty areas will be near each other. For example, the third floor includes all mother and baby services – labor and delivery, C-section, neonatal ICU, and pediatrics. We’re bringing the physicians closer to their patients.” Having private patient rooms instead of semi-private will also foster safety and efficiency, as studies have shown that there are less patient falls and medical errors than occur with patient transfers.

The project broke ground in September 2011 with great fanfare and community participation. “We’ve been at this about three and a half years between design and the OSHPD approval process,” said Oden. “It’s a 41 month construction schedule. We’re looking forward to Spring 2015, when we can open the doors.”

Follow CMHS’ progress: <http://www.cmhsbecause.org/>.

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