

# community connection

A periodic update for Mercy General Hospital's neighbors  
in the East Sacramento community

November 2005

## Dear Neighbor,



Four years ago, in December 2001, Mercy General Hospital announced its plans to build a state-of-the-art Heart Center on our hospital campus. The Heart Center would allow us to accomplish two critically important objectives: 1) meet California's seismic retrofit law, SB 1953; and 2) provide a modern facility in which Mercy can continue to provide the highest level of cardiac

care available, utilizing the latest technologies for improving patient care and outcomes.

Since that time, Mercy has worked hard to establish open lines of communication, while responding to feedback from local residents and neighborhood leaders.

Throughout the process, we have distributed letters and newsletters to local residents with regular project updates and we've held several large neighborhood meetings, as well as smaller Neighborhood Advisory Committee meetings. In addition, we met for a year with a formal Neighborhood Construction and Renovation Task Force at the encouragement of our local neighborhood association, ESIA.

**We plan to host the next open Neighborhood Update Meeting on Dec. 8 in the hospital's Main Auditorium.**

At the meeting, we will share any new developments related to the project and Mercy's heart program, update you on the status of the City of Sacramento's Environmental Impact Review and answer questions.

I look forward to seeing you there.

Denny Powell  
President, Mercy General Hospital

## Heart Center to Replace Oldest Mercy Buildings

As an East Sacramentan, you may be asking yourself the question: why doesn't Mercy General Hospital build the Alex G. Spanos Heart Center on another site? We at Mercy want to help you understand our reasons for this decision.

There are two main reasons why Mercy General's current location is viewed as the best site for the Heart Center:

- 1) If Mercy General Hospital does not build another building to replace the two buildings that need to close in 2013, it cannot continue to provide general hospital services to the East Sacramento community past that date.
- 2) Mercy General Hospital is a central site for a regional cardiovascular program — a site that fits with the geography of the region and the structure of healthcare services in the area.

*Let's examine the first issue — the Alex G. Spanos Heart Center is a replacement building that allows Mercy General to continue providing uninterrupted service to the Sacramento community.*

The State of California has mandated that by 2013 acute care inpatient hospital buildings must meet stricter seismic retrofit requirements. Currently, Mercy General's South, East and North Wings do not meet these requirements.

Retrofitting the two oldest buildings — the South and East Wings — is not operationally feasible because it would significantly disrupt patient care as entire units would need to be temporarily shut down to complete the work, which is estimated to cost between \$80–\$100 million. In addition, in 2030, the State requires these two buildings be taken out of service even if they are retrofitted. Therefore, the significant expense and disruption associated with retrofitting the buildings would yield only a 17-year benefit. Therefore, it has been decided that the South and East Wings will not be retrofitted.

*Continued on page 2*

## Mercy General Neighborhood Update Meeting

Thursday, Dec. 8  
Mercy General Hospital  
Main Auditorium  
6 p.m.

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The North Wing requires much less disruptive “non-structural” retrofits and can continue to be used after the 2030 State deadline. This building will undergo seismic retrofits before 2013 and these retrofits should cause no disruption to the community as they involve only internal bracing.

The hospital has studied a variety of options to address the challenge of closing two buildings, which together comprise more than two thirds of the hospital’s beds, by 2013. Mercy General’s goal is to meet the requirements of this state law, improve patient care, complete the work with as little disruption as possible to the community and our patients and to continue providing general acute care services to the community well past the 2013 seismic deadline. If a replacement building is not constructed, the hospital will be faced with a substantial loss of capacity and services, and will be unable to meet the needs of the central Sacramento communities.

To fully understand this, it’s important to know that if the Alex G. Spanos Heart Center is not built, Mercy General Hospital’s capacity and services would be reduced by two thirds — which would likely mean closure of the hospital’s Emergency Department (ED) and other vital local services.

Sacramento has long faced the challenge of providing enough emergency room access for its residents. EDs in the downtown area are frequently closed due to high volume and ambulances are diverted to the nearest open ED. The loss of an ED in the downtown area would have a significant impact on the other area hospitals and would make it even more difficult for patients to access emergency care.

For example, below is a summary of the hours that downtown hospital EDs have been closed each month, on average, in the last calendar year.

**Average ED Closure Hours Per Month (2004)**

<i>UCDMC</i>	<i>250 hours</i>
<i>Sutter General</i>	<i>132 hours</i>
<i>Sutter Memorial</i>	<i>54 hours</i>
<i>Mercy General</i>	<i>17 hours</i>

*Now let’s look at the second reason: the strategic significance of a central Sacramento location.*

- There is area-wide recognition that central Sacramento is the primary “referral hub” for specialized healthcare services. Mercy General provides a wide variety of highly specialized services, including heart and stroke care and retina and spine surgeries.
- Central Sacramento is a geographically central location for residents throughout the Sacramento area and beyond. The major arterials that connect all quadrants of Northern California run through the central city, making it a logical referral center for these specialized services.
- With three highly regarded tertiary facilities operating within a one-mile radius, specialists in the area have become accustomed to the accessibility of practicing at various hospitals. Keep in mind, the physicians who work at Mercy are not employed by the hospital — they operate their own

## Fast Response Helps Save Sacramento Man’s Life



*Gerald Kerbaugh in his garden.*

One moment, Gerald Kerbaugh was tending to the flowers in his garden. The next, he was on a table in Mercy General Hospital’s Cardiac Catheterization Lab having a small balloon inflated in one of his arteries to restore the flow of blood and oxygen to his heart.

“I was stepping from my flower bed to the lawn in my back yard when I felt pain in the middle of my chest,” says Kerbaugh. “The pain and pressure increased and I knew I was

having a heart attack.” He made it into his apartment unit near 25th and L Streets, took two aspirin and dialed 9-1-1.

“I remember the emergency personnel came in a red ambulance. I have insurance through Kaiser so I told them to take me there,” he says. The EMS crew commented on the traffic they would encounter by doing so and knew that Kerbaugh may end up back at Mercy General anyway if he needed interventional cardiac care. (Mercy General Hospital provides all such cardiac services for Kaiser patients in Sacramento, including interventional Cath Lab procedures and heart surgery.) Since every second counts in a heart-related emergency, the EMS crew brought him directly to Mercy General.

“I barely remember the Emergency Department because everything went so fast,” Kerbaugh says. In all, just 20 minutes passed from the time he entered the hospital’s ED to the time the balloon was inflated in his artery.

independent businesses and make their own decisions about where to practice. Most of these physicians will likely not “follow” a single program to a distant geographic site.

- Most central-area physicians operate their practices on or near one of the central-area facilities and, in many cases, live in the older communities near the hospitals. Many of these physicians have told us they would have limited interest in relocating their offices and/or residences.
- The Mercy Medical Plaza, which includes two medical office buildings, is home to many of the key medical staff, including some who have condominium ownership in the north building. These physicians and their employees would be adversely impacted if the hospital were to move or cease providing inpatient services.
- The Mercy Medical Plaza provides office space for cardiologists and cardiac surgeons who can move between their offices and the hospital on an on-call basis with maximum efficiency for patients. This has enhanced the collaborative nature of Mercy’s heart program and helped make it as strong as it is today. This collaboration cannot be simply transplanted.

*Mercy planners have analyzed alternatives for the Alex G. Spanos Heart Center at other sites, but given all the factors to consider, the Mercy General Hospital site is viewed as the best location for the patients we serve, the physicians who practice here and for the community as a whole.*

The American College of Cardiology recommends that this “door to dilatation” time be no more than 80 minutes.

Kerbaugh can thank a number of people for his fast treatment. First, he can thank himself! He recognized the symptoms of a heart attack and understood immediately that the pain and pressure he was feeling in his chest signaled an emergency. He can also thank the emergency personnel who arrived at his home quickly and communicated directly with the hospital’s ED. And finally, he can thank the Mercy General staff for the immediate and appropriate response and treatment, which is available 24 hours a day.

Kerbaugh’s story is just one example of the importance of knowing the symptoms of a heart attack and acting quickly. Today he is taking life a little slower, but is ready to return to work and his garden.

## Hearts for Mercy

Michael Chang, MD, Mercy General Hospital’s Medical Director for the Mercy Heart Institute, is just one of the cardiologists who provides outstanding care to patients at Mercy. He and his colleagues work with Mercy because of our commitment to providing the highest quality care available and a truly comprehensive cardiac program. He also recognizes the importance of the team of clinicians that all play a role in caring for Mercy’s patients. Dr. Chang has a “Heart for Mercy” because of the high quality and compassionate care his patients receive when they need it most.



Mercy General Hospital has been meeting the healthcare needs of the East Sacramento community and beyond for more than 80 years. If you have a “Heart for Mercy,” please contact us at 733-6826.

### Thank You for Attending Our Celebration

Mercy General would like to thank everyone who participated in the Mercy Community Celebration on Saturday, Sept. 10. The event helped mark the hospital’s 80th anniversary at 40th and J Streets and offered an opportunity to thank our patients, physicians, employees and volunteers for their continued support of the Sisters of Mercy and their healthcare ministry.

City Councilman Steve Cohn presented Sister Sheila Browne, President of the Sisters of Mercy of Auburn, with a resolution from the City of Sacramento acknowledging the Sisters and Mercy General for 80 years of service to the surrounding community. Mercy General Hospital President Denny Powell presented a check for \$25,000 to the Sacramento Food Bank and Family Services (SFBFS). SFBFS will use the funds as seed money to help develop a permanent location in north Sacramento. Mercy General’s sister hospital, Mercy San Juan Medical Center, matched the amount for a total donation of \$50,000.

I would like to give special recognition to BJ Ross, a long-time East Sacramento resident and graduate of Mercy’s nursing school, Class of 1949. BJ spent the afternoon at our history booth, sharing her memories of studying and working for Mercy as a nurse years ago.

Thank you again to all who participated in this tremendous event.

Sandra Meyers  
Neighborhood Liaison, Mercy General Hospital

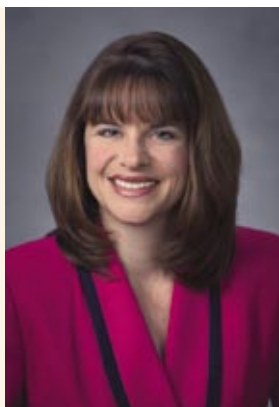
# Calendar of Events

## Update on EIR Process

The City of Sacramento is continuing its work on a full Environmental Impact Review (EIR) on the Mercy General Hospital Heart Center project. The City expects to release the Draft EIR sometime in January or February next year. The document release will be followed by a 45-day public comment period.

If you would like to be included in the City's future mailings regarding the Mercy General project, please contact:

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E-mail: [lalagozian@cityofsacramento.org](mailto:lalagozian@cityofsacramento.org)  
Phone: 808-2659, Fax: 808-7185



## Your Neighborhood Contact

Sandra Meyers, Mercy General's Neighborhood Liaison, is available to answer your questions about the hospital. Sandra can be reached at [Sandra.Meyers@chw.edu](mailto:Sandra.Meyers@chw.edu) or 453-4432.

## Heart to Heart: A Healthy Living Event for Women

**Thursday, Feb. 16, 6–8 p.m.**

**Mercy General Hospital Auditoriums  
Free**

In recognition of National Heart Month, Mercy General and several local businesses are partnering for this special annual event. The evening will focus on helping women live healthily and prevent heart disease — the number one killer of American women. At the event you will enjoy:

- An array of delicious, heart-healthy foods
- Cooking demonstrations
- Wine tasting and a chocolate fountain
- Massage, mini-facials and other pampering activities
- Low-key exercise demonstrations
- Health screenings and information

Participants will also have a chance to win “tools” to help them live healthier in 2006! For more information, call 733-6966.

## Neighborhood Advisory Committee (NAC)

The NAC continues to meet to discuss different ways Mercy General Hospital can be a good neighbor and an integral member of the East Sacramento community. If you would like to receive a copy of the **NAC 2006 meeting** schedule, please contact Sandra Meyers, Mercy General Neighborhood Liaison at 453-4432 or by e-mail at [Sandra.Meyers@chw.edu](mailto:Sandra.Meyers@chw.edu).

## Mercy General Hospital

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