

# community connection

June 2004

## Dear Neighbor,

On behalf of the staff and physicians at Mercy General Hospital, thank you for the continued opportunity to serve the healthcare needs of this community. I am privileged to lead an organization that has been a vital part of its community for nearly 80 years. Together, we all have much to look forward to in the future.

A state law (SB 1953) requires Mercy General to retrofit or replace three of its buildings. Hospital staff and many of its interested neighbors have been working on a plan that will allow the hospital to meet the new state mandates and continue to serve the needs of this community for years to come. I encourage you to read through this newsletter to find out more.

I want to share my gratitude publicly with the many community members who have shared countless hours discussing the hospital's future in this community. Our Construction and Renovation Task Force includes representatives from the East Sacramento Improvement Association, McKinley Elvas Neighborhood Alliance, East Sacramento Chamber of Commerce, East Sacramento Preservation Task Force, Sacred Heart Parish School, City Planning and Economic Development departments, our hospital volunteer Community Council, Mercy Foundation, Mercy General employees and leadership, individual neighbors as well as Councilman Steve Cohn. This Task

Force and our Neighborhood Advisory Committee have been valuable resources for suggestions and feedback. Their input has helped shape the plans we have today.



Thank you,

Denny Powell  
President

Mercy General Hospital



## Fiction vs. Fact

**Fiction:** I heard the building is going to be more than 10 stories high.

**Fact:** The proposed Alex G. Spanos Heart Center is a five-story building, comparable to some of the existing buildings on the hospital campus.

**Fiction:** I was told a helipad might be added to the hospital.

**Fact:** We are not considering adding a helipad to Mercy General, nor has it been considered at any point in our planning.

**Fiction:** I thought Sacred Heart Parish School was moving.

**Fact:** More than a year ago, the parish and school leadership determined they would not be relocating the school at this time. We understand the financial constraints the school faces and respect their position on the issue of relocation. Since that time, representatives from the school and the hospital have been working together to address the traffic circulation challenges on the campus to benefit everyone who uses it.

**Fiction:** I heard the hospital planned to take out private residences and acquire more property around the hospital.

**Fact:** When Mercy General began holding its Neighborhood Update Meetings, there was discussion about taking down homes we own around the MercyCare property. Mercy has abandoned that concept. The hospital's current plans do not include the demolition of any residences and the hospital is not actively pursuing the purchase of additional property near Mercy General.

For neighborhood suggestions or feedback,  
contact Sandra Meyers at 453-4432,  
or e-mail her at [smeyers@chw.edu](mailto:smeyers@chw.edu).

## The Alex G. Spanos Heart Center

The Alex G. Spanos Heart Center will be a state-of-the-art facility to match the high caliber of Mercy General's nationally renowned heart program. It will:

- Consolidate Mercy General's inpatient heart care services into one building
- Provide a 128-bed, five-story replacement facility at the center of the campus
- Improve patient flow and enhance patient satisfaction
- Incorporate a new, more accessible chapel for patients, families and staff
- Relocate the main hospital entrance to J Street, as it was when Mercy General was built in 1925
- Reflect the architectural style of East Sacramento



## Note from the Architect

Dear Hospital Neighbors,

I want to share a few of the details my team and I have been — and will continue to be — focused on as the Mercy General construction and renovation project takes shape. As the Heart Center architect, I've had the opportunity to meet many of the hospital's neighbors and to hear their concerns and desires about construction in the neighborhood.

Understandably, the residents I've spoken with are concerned about construction. I've been asked about the potential noise, traffic, dust and other disruptions that

might impact those living and working closest to the hospital. The hospital staff and physicians are also concerned about potential disruptions. My colleagues and I have a great deal of experience in this area and will be able to mitigate many of the disruptions. We know that just a few yards away from the construction site are patients in surgery, mothers in labor, babies sleeping, students in class as well as residents in their living rooms.

I've also had the opportunity to research the wonderful

architecture that helps make the East Sacramento neighborhood so desirable. While there are a variety of buildings, styles and designs in the area, there are also some consistent themes. I've incorporated the beauty and style that is common in this community into the design of the Alex G. Spanos Heart Center. Many of the neighbors who have seen the design are pleased with the result. I hope that you will be, too.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Onnen".

Tom Onnen  
HDR Architecture, Inc.

**“While there are a variety of buildings, styles and designs in the area, there are also some consistent themes. I've incorporated the beauty and style that is common in this community into the design of the Alex G. Spanos Heart Center.”**

# Construction and Renovation at Mercy General

To meet seismic mandates set forth by the state of California, and to continue its healthcare ministry, Mercy General needs to make some changes. Construction of the new Alex G. Spanos Heart Center will allow the hospital to move its heart services into a building that meets these mandates. Services now offered in the North Wing could then be relocated to allow for retrofits to that building. When North Wing work is completed, patient care services would move back into that building, and out of the South and East Wings. The South and East Wings will not be retrofitted due to the high cost of the work and the age of those buildings.

The South and East Wings will continue to house vital Food and Nutrition Services, as they do now, and will also be used by a variety of departments that currently lack adequate space.

To summarize the proposed construction and renovation plans:

- Construct the Alex G. Spanos Heart Center
- Retrofit North Wing to meet new state standards
- Maintain South and East Wings to provide needed space for existing, but cramped, hospital departments but do not retrofit them

## What about parking and traffic?

Neighbors, patients and employees agree that the hospital needs additional parking capacity. The Heart Center will be built on existing surface parking spaces. The hospital has looked at nearly every surface area that it owns to determine best place(s) to add parking. There are no easy answers, which is why we are considering every possible option, including:

- Reconfiguring existing parking areas;
- Adding a level to the structure along H Street;
- Building a structure on existing surface parking lots;
- Creating a surface lot on the current chapel property; and
- Adding parking capacity to the MercyCare property on 39th Street (the building has been vacant for two years, and the remaining MercyCare property is currently used for surface parking).

At the same time, the hospital has engaged a transportation expert to further enhance its programs that encourage employees to carpool, walk, bike or use public transit to get to work.

We are not adding services or increasing the overall number of patients we can take care of (no new licensed beds will be added). Because of that, we do not expect a significant increase in the amount of traffic coming to the hospital. The City of Sacramento prefers to conduct a full traffic study as part of the Environmental Impact Report process. The EIR will be conducted after Mercy General submits an application to the City.

## Why is this necessary?

In 1996, California passed its Seismic Retrofit Law (SB 1953) that requires all California inpatient acute hospitals to meet certain structural and non-structural requirements to protect patients in the event of an earthquake. We would have to spend \$87 million to retrofit our acute-care inpatient buildings (those housing patients who require acute care overnight). This retrofit work would also severely impact our ability to provide patient care. It would be similar to remodeling the front half of your home and living in just the remaining half. Retrofitting the hospital buildings would require massive bed closures over the course of four to five years. It would be very difficult for the hospital to stay in continuous operation during such a period.

At the same time, Mercy General's world-class heart program is at the limits of its physical capacity, and in constant operation (18-20 hours per day). There is a need for more cardiac surgery suites and catheterization laboratories to accommodate the current volume of patients. Medical technology is also changing rapidly — particularly in the cardiovascular field. Modern facilities can help the program keep pace with new advances, which allows Mercy General to continually provide its patients with the most advanced care possible. Our nationally renowned heart program needs a physical home that matches its exceptional patient care and reputation.

**For neighborhood suggestions or feedback, contact Sandra Meyers at 453-4432, or e-mail her at [smeyers@chw.edu](mailto:smeyers@chw.edu).**

## Talking with our Neighbors

Thank you for taking time to learn more about what is happening at Mercy General. Throughout the summer, we will work with our Neighborhood Construction and Renovation Task Force (Task Force) as well as our Neighborhood Advisory Committee (NAC) to develop the proposal we will submit to the City of Sacramento. The hospital anticipates submitting an application by the end of the summer.



Current concept for the Alex G. Spanos Heart Center. A formal application to the City of Sacramento has not yet been made.

In the meantime, please look for more communications from the hospital and invitations to Neighborhood Update Meetings. You can also contact our Neighborhood Liaison, Sandra Meyers, at any time for:

- Neighborhood Update Meeting dates;
- Information on our NAC meetings (the NAC is open to all interested neighbors);
- The names of people who are participating in our formal Task Force on behalf of their neighborhood organizations; and
- An opportunity to make suggestions, ask questions or raise concerns that relate to the day-to-day operation of the hospital and how we can be a good neighbor to you.

You can telephone Sandra directly at 453-4432, or e-mail her at [smeyers@chw.edu](mailto:smeyers@chw.edu).



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