

NCH heart center plans revised

Proposal for structure downscaled from six stories to five in order to appease some neighbors' concerns

Liz Freeman
Naples Daily News
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

The NCH Healthcare System has downscaled plans for a new heart center to be five stories and not as tall as the Baker Hospital Downtown.

The revision from the original proposal of a six-story heart center at 98 feet in height is to appease nearby neighbors' concerns of another tower-

ing building becoming part of the hospital system in the largely residential area.

The freestanding heart center would be built at the site of the three-story Telford Education building that would be demolished. Telford sits south of the main hospital.

NCH officials hosted a community meeting Tuesday at Telford to explain the plans and answer questions. About 150 people attended.

Hospital officials began working on



Hiltz

plans last year to build a freestanding cardiac center to address growing need for services and to stop a migration of local residents traveling elsewhere for heart care. The project cost is around \$175 million.

Currently, NCH's cardiac program is located in the main Baker hospital.

The nonprofit system is Collier's largest hospital provider with a combined 713 beds and it saw 170,000 patient visits in 2021. It had total revenue of \$791 million, according to financial disclo-

tures for the fiscal year ending Sept. 30, 2021.

NCH last year recruited a new president for the heart center, Dr. Robert Cumbeddu, from Cleveland Clinic Florida, to help expand cardiac services, recruit more physicians, and get the hospital system involved in clinical trials.

Heart disease is the third leading cause of death in both Collier and Lee counties, and the second leading cause of death in the state, according to the state Department of Health. There were nearly 800 cardiac-related deaths last

See NCH, Page 4A

Naples Daily News - 03/03/2022

Page : A04

NCH

Continued from Page 3A

year in Collier, according to DOH.

What are the details?

The original proposal for the new heart center was six stories at 98 feet in height and would have been taller than the Baker hospital which stands at 92 feet.

The existing hospital was built years before city voters approved a 42-foot height limit or three stories for commercial buildings in 2000.

NCH officials have been meeting with neighborhood associations in what they call "listening tours" and learned residents were not pleased with idea of a new building at 98 feet in height.

"From the listening tours, we realized the community was not going to happy with a building taller than the Baker building," Matt Heinle, general counsel for NCH, said.

The new heart building is proposed to be 75 feet tall at the roof line, according to the revised plan. With mechanical hardware on the roof that would be shielded, the total height would be 83 feet.

That's nine feet shorter than the existing Baker hospital, but from the ground floor looking up, the two buildings would look identical in height, Heinle said.

Paul Hiltz, president and chief executive officer of NCH, said he understands how residents are concerned



NCH's cardiac program is located in the main Baker hospital.NCH HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

about maintaining the neighborly ambience around the hospital.

He points out the hospital has been in the community for 65 years and expanding cardiac services to keep pace with population grow is the next logical step, he said. The goal is to make NCH a destination for heart care, he said.

"We think it is the health system you deserve," he said.

Roughly 70% of heart and stroke patients live within 10 miles of the downtown hospital.

Getting to the hospital and into treatment immediately is crucial when you are having a heart attack or stroke to prevent permanent heart damage or

death, he said.

"When you need it, you need it in a matter of minutes," he said.

The goal is to make NCH a destination for heart care and reduce that roughly 30% of heart patients travel outside of the region for their medical care.

The heart center would encompass 180,000 square feet of building space in the five floors. A new parking garage is planned that would not exceed 42 feet in height.

The project cost is \$175 million to \$200 million that would largely be raised through philanthropy, Heinle said.

NCH currently has 13 cardiologists and three heart surgeons. Last year more than 470 open heart procedures were performed and 4,200 patients were sent to the cardiac catheterization lab for diagnostics or procedures.

The plan for the new heart center is to add two to three more cardiovascular operating rooms and 20 or more cardiac intensive care units.

A hospital zoning district

When NCH officials last year began meeting with officials in the City of Naples about the heart center, city planners recommended NCH apply for a hospital zoning designation.

The 22-acre campus currently has three zoning categories.

Having a hospital zoning district caused outcry from nearby residents that a nursing home could be built someday or that NCH would want other taller buildings.

NCH has pledged to put in writing that it only wants the one new building for the heart center at the revised height. If it could accomplish that without the hospital zoning district, Heinle said that would be fine with NCH.

The Naples City Council has a workshop March 8 where the new hospital zoning district will be considered.

NCH has proposed the hospital zoning district only include the main block of the Baker campus.

Hospital-owned buildings on the north side of Fourth Avenue North and east of Eighth Street North would not be included.