

Baptist Health System facility will be more than just another local hospital



By J. Louise Larson New Braunfels Herald-Zeitung | Posted: Saturday, April 2, 2011 9:09 pm

NEW BRAUNFELS — With a 55-acre campus at the corner of Farm-to-Market 1101 and FM 306, the new Baptist Health System hospital is projected to be more than a hospital.

The preliminary schematic includes water features, a community gardening area, a ring of a 1.15-mile walking trail around the outer rectangular perimeter — as well as retail shopping and dining, ancillary health services and even a school of nursing.

“We’re approaching this development opportunity as an extension of the Main Street concept. There will be opportunities to learn, improve your health, get well, communicate with fellow community members and to be entertained on this proposed campus,” said Tess Coody Anders, CEO of the Vanguard Health Systems project dubbed the Central Texas Hospital Corridor.

The particulars are still “in the works” — but current specs call for 130 beds or more in the hospital, with the ability to expand to 300 beds.

The campus would lead to sizable job creation, with 600-700 jobs.

A groundbreaking is expected in late May or early June, but while it’s too early to publish images pending the final design and board approval of the campus, Anders talked about what she believes will be a prototype that could gain national attention.

“We spent a lot of time visioning where health and health care were headed ... Things are changing,” she said.

“What we’re focusing on now is being more of a health and health care enterprise — not just a hospital-specific company,” she said.

“In the future, it will be our responsibility as a health system to ensure that people get well and/or that people stay well. We’ll be responsible for the health of the people we serve, not just

their health care. We want to create an environment with this proposed project that nurtures and enhances our ability to do that.”.

While hospitals remain an important part of care delivery, physicians and ancillary providers of imaging, laboratory and rehab services are also critical parts, as well as the patient-consumer, Anders said.

“What we see is a future where everyone in the health care chain works together — that we become more integrated, more connected in the way care is delivered and the way information flows across the system,” she said.

“Baptist and its parent company, Vanguard, are really becoming more of a health and wellness enterprise, which has among its assets hospitals.”

When Vanguard sought a place to build a prototype for what an intersection of health, wellness and prevention could look like in the future, what it found was the niche on I-35 where Comal, Guadalupe and Hays counties meet.

“This is an area experiencing explosive, double-digit growth in population ... and a community with a robust employer base that would like to see the health of its employees improve. This is a community that would like to continue to be a progressive, attractive place for employers to locate their businesses and bring new jobs,” she said.

“That’s a wonderful place for us to try this prototype.”

There’s a proposed learning and conference center — and a school to train future healthcare givers.

“We’d like to attract a school of health professions to the campus with a school of nursing,” Anders said.

The Baptist School of Health Professions in San Antonio enrolls about 400 students in RN nursing, radiology tech and surgery tech programs. The New Braunfels satellite program would begin with an RN program, Anders said.

“We’re calling New Braunfels our green field — it’s a clean slate, an opportunity to do things in an exceptional way from the ground up. For a project like this, that means finding ways to work with the physician community.

“We believe mightily in the primary care physician,” Anders said, adding the company will be listening to both local physicians and consumers. A standing consumer panel is planned for the project, and Anders said she welcomes community members interested in providing their feedback.

BHS has a development office on the ground in New Braunfels. Nashville-based Earl Swenson Associates has been named the project’s architectural firm.

The site plan is being completed. The project is expected to take between 18-20 months.

Baptist Health System is an investor-owned entity with a five-hospital network in San Antonio. Parent company Vanguard Health Systems, founded in 1997, is publicly traded.