

# Construction begins on \$130 million hospital near Boynton Beach

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It might not seem like much now - just some workers pushing dirt around on 58 acres west of Boynton Beach - but by January 2013, it will be home to Palm Beach County's newest hospital.

Work has officially begun on the \$130 million, 80-bed Bethesda West Hospital.

The not-for-profit hospital, which will be built at the northeast corner of Boynton Beach Boulevard and U.S. 441, will serve as a satellite campus for the 401-bed Bethesda Memorial Hospital to the east on Seacrest Boulevard.

Construction is expected to take about 30 months, said Bethesda CEO Robert Hill, with buildings going up about three to six months from now.

The first phase of the project, which is expected to cost \$130 million, calls for a 210,000-square-foot hospital with 80 beds in a five-story tower, with plans to expand over time to 400 beds. There also will be a separate medical office building on the property, which is scheduled to open by early 2012.

The hospital will share the same medical staff with Bethesda Memorial Hospital, but will have 300 full-time employees, plus volunteers. All of the inpatient rooms and emergency rooms will be private - no partitions or open bays.

The hospital also will offer on-demand room-service dining, meaning that patients won't have to eat at the same time as the rest of their wing of rooms.

Instead of a paper patient chart, there will be a computerized chart at each patient's bedside. Patients will wear armbands with bar codes, which will be scanned each time a medication is given or a procedure is performed. Doctors will be notified via computer or smartphone when a patient's test results are in, and families can monitor the progress of their loved ones electronically while they are in surgery.

"Hopefully this will increase the efficiency of care, shorten the length of stay for the patient and reduce the cost of health care," Hill said.

Other features include a 24-hour emergency department with 18 treatment rooms, 10 critical/intensive care rooms and a full range of imaging services including MRI, CT, general radiography, ultrasound, mammography and cardiac stress testing. There also will be conference rooms for family and community education, and a private chapel and healing garden.

The hospital will not initially offer cardiac surgery, pediatrics or obstetric care.

Most of the money for construction comes from a \$130 million tax-exempt bond, Hill said. Bethesda also has ramped up its fund-raising efforts.

Bethesda fought a seven-year legal battle with its competitors, and during the fight received support from the Coalition of Boynton West Residential Associations, which represents 89 communities west of Boynton Beach. Some residents even gave statements in court in support of the hospital.

In return, residents were able to shape the hospital's plans with their input. COBWRA created the Bethesda West Hospital Support Committee to serve as a liaison. Myrna Rosoff, chairwoman of the committee, said that about 1,500 surveys were distributed to residents.

"Bethesda hospital historically was put into place and organized by community people, and in effect, we're continuing that," Rosoff said.

In return for their support, Bethesda has sponsored events for COBWRA.

The new hospital is one of the largest construction projects in the county and will put a lot of local construction workers back to work, Hill said.

Bethesda Healthcare System has had a presence west of Boynton Beach since 1996, when it opened Bethesda Health City, a 135,000-square-foot outpatient medical mall at 10301 Hagen Ranch Road.

Growth has slowed in the western area, but Hill said he and other hospital administrators have never doubted the need for this hospital.

"Once the economy improves, we want to be ready," he said.