



# University Health System

**For Immediate Release**

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## **University Health System evaluating plans to address emergency & crisis care *Top priority is assuring immediate life-saving care for critically injured patients***

**(SAN ANTONIO – November 28, 2007)** When it comes to caring for people critically injured in automobile crashes and other traumatic incidents, it's not just about getting the injured to *any* hospital. Complex injuries require the type of specialized care available only at Level I trauma centers. There are just 13 Level I trauma centers in all of Texas, and the Level I Trauma Center at San Antonio's University Hospital – last expanded about 25 years ago – is too small to keep up with today's demand for service. It's also not at all prepared to handle the future needs of South Texas' growing population, or a large-scale disaster.

In an effort to “right size” University Hospital and provide the appropriate mix of diagnostic and treatment services at the hospital, as well as at its large downtown clinic, the University Health Center – Downtown, the University Health System Board of Managers is considering proposed options to construct a Trauma Tower at University Hospital and a new Urgent Care building downtown.

“Assuring that we are able to care for those most in need of our services, in the most appropriate healthcare location is our highest priority,” said board chair Dr. Robert L. Jimenez, as the Board of Managers discussed proposed recommendations at its Nov. 27 meeting. “Accomplishing this goal in the best interests of our patients, as well as all Bexar County taxpayers, has been our focus from day one of this lengthy process,” added board member Alex Briseno. “We never can know when our life, or that of a loved one, might depend on the University Hospital trauma team, so ensuring they are equipped with the resources they need to save lives is an excellent investment for our community.”

Following this evaluation process, the Board of Managers will present recommendations to Bexar County Commissioners Court for approval. “It’s important to assure Commissioners that this is a needs-driven proposition,” said Robert Engberg, chair of the board’s budget and finance committee. “We need it because it’s obsolete. We need it because of growth.”

Board members have already identified Phase I priorities for both campuses. The four urgent projects for University Hospital include:

- Emergency Center expansion
- Additional inpatient rooms & replacement of many existing adult rooms in the oldest part of the hospital, which opened in 1968
- Appropriately sizing diagnostic and treatment areas
- Constructing more parking for patients and staff

Priorities for the University Health Center – Downtown (formerly the Robert B. Green Hospital, constructed in 1915) include expanding:

- Acute and crisis care services
- Diagnostic imaging
- Pharmacy services
- Parking

The total project costs estimates for Phase I priorities under consideration for both campuses are in the range of \$650 to \$700 million. The major components and cost estimates (in millions \$) include:

- New Trauma Tower with Expanded  
Emergency Center & Surgical Capacity \$ 519
- University Health Center Downtown \$ 80
- Central Utility Plant for University Hospital \$ 54
- New Parking Garage at University Hospital \$ 42

Total project costs could be less, depending on the outcomes of a series of management

initiatives, which include working with The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio to construct a parking garage on a section of its property adjacent to University Hospital and explorations by University Health System and CPS Energy on the feasibility of constructing of a state-of-the-art Cogeneration energy plant. Cogeneration harnesses steam and heat, which would otherwise be discarded as waste, and redirects it to create energy for heating and cooling.

University Health System currently has about \$100 million available in cash reserves to fund portions of this project, and is working with financial advisors to develop a combination of financial options.

Phase I includes replacing 283 beds in the 1968 tower and adding 140-210 beds in the new Trauma Tower. “There is no doubt we need to address the community’s needs, particularly in the areas of emergency services and trauma care,” said chair of the board’s planning and operations committee Ira Smith, as the hospital is currently experiencing severe overcrowding and lengthy emergency room wait times.

The University Health System Board of Managers plans to update Bexar County Commissioners on its progress and present initial plans on Dec. 18.

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*University Health System is the public hospital district for Bexar County, Texas and, in partnership with The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, is a nationally recognized academic medical center. Facilities include University Hospital, the primary teaching hospital for the UT Health Science Center. Currently operating 400 beds, University Hospital is the lead Level I Trauma Center for 22 South Texas counties. Six community clinics provide outpatient primary and specialty care.*

*University Health System is a joint owner of San Antonio AirLife, one of the nation’s most recognized emergency air medical transport services, and a sponsor of the Center for Health Care Services.*