

Nonprofit plans expanded Woodland health clinic

CommuniCare Health Centers hopes to consolidate clinics

KATHY ROBERTSON | STAFF WRITER

CommuniCare Health Centers is itching to ditch its digs in the former Yolo County hospital and build something new across the street.

The federally qualified health center bought the vacant lot across North Cottonwood Street from its Peterson Clinic in Woodland in March.

The nonprofit wants to build a \$7.5 million health clinic on the site. The plan is to consolidate its Peterson clinic with its John H. Jones Community Clinic on Court Street into the new building in order to offer integrated services to more low-income Woodland residents in one convenient downtown location.

The clinic has yet to raise construction funds but has many of the other pieces in place. It owns the land, and a tentative map and conditional-use permit were approved by the Woodland Planning Commission last month.

The proposed 21,053-square-foot building would be about 8,000 square feet bigger than the two existing clinics, offering room to expand programs.

If all goes well, construction could start next spring and be done by early 2013.

"CommuniCare plays a vital role in indigent health care in this county — and is the sole provider of primary care for this population," said Yolo County Health Director Jill Cook. "With the launch of health care reform, we'll really rely on them as a critical piece in chronic disease management, prevention, establishing a medical home, reducing costs and meeting the needs of this population."

Construction partners are lined up. They include Hibser Yamauchi Architects Inc., Unger Construction Co. and Cunningham Engineering. A sculpture will be created by Davis resident Donna Billick.

"We're shovel-ready," CommuniCare chief executive officer Robin Affrime said. "Now, it's all about money."

PATIENT VISITS UP

Dr. John Jones founded what was then called the Davis Free Clinic in 1972.

The goal was to provide high quality, affordable services to those who traditionally didn't have access to health care.

The program expanded over the years to include women's health, substance abuse, pediatrics and dental care.

CommuniCare was designated a federally qualified health center in July 2007,



RENDERING COURTESY OF COMMUNICARE HEALTH CENTERS

A proposed \$7.5 million health clinic in Woodland would consolidate older facilities and provide room for growth.

a program designed to boost funding for primary care health care services in underserved areas. The designation brings higher federal reimbursement for Medicaid patients in order to offset the cost of caring for the indigent.

The nonprofit currently operates clinics in Davis and West Sacramento in addition to the two clinics in Woodland and a dental clinic in Esparto.

A total of 23,280 patients were served in the fiscal year ended June 30, 2010, the last figures available. That's up slightly from 22,889 the year before.

The nonprofit recorded 40,859 health education and research encounters in 2010, up more than 11 percent from 36,772 the previous year.

CommuniCare generated almost \$14.5 million in revenue in fiscal year ended June 30, 2010, up from \$12.8

million in 2009; net income soared to \$2.1 million from \$347,575. The nonprofit faced a \$1 million budget shortfall in 2008 and closed its clinic in Knights Landing.

Last year, 63 percent of the nonprofit's revenue came from government fee-for-service programs and patients who paid their own tab. Another 20 percent came from government grants and contracts. Seventeen percent came from non-governmental grants, foundation grants and community fundraising.

Fifty-two percent of patients are uninsured; 45 percent have Medicaid or Medicare. The other 3 percent have private insurance of other public coverage.

Eighty-six percent of clients report income at or below 100 percent of the federal poverty line of \$22,050 in annual income for a family of four.

THE LAND DEAL

The only tenant left in the old county hospital, CommuniCare looked for alternate sites it could renovate but didn't find anything.

The new lot is the former site of Yolo County's Health Department and Department of Drug, Alcohol and Mental Health. The buildings were closed and demolished in 2008.

The county sold the 4.32-acre site as surplus property to CommuniCare in March. The price: \$282,268.

"It's a fabulous deal," Affrime said.

The county health department and employment and social services center are nearby, creating a downtown hub for essential community services, Woodland Mayor Art Pimentel said.

"I'm a big supporter of the project," he said. "It will increase access to affordable health care for many low-income families in the Woodland area."

Now comes the fundraising stage. The project is expected to cost about \$7.5 million, including equipment, parking and signs.

The money is expected to come from a variety of sources that may include local philanthropy, a bank loan, bond financing, federal grant funding for capital improvements at federally qualified health centers

CommuniCare Health Centers

Business: To provide high-quality health care to low-income residents in Yolo County

Serves: More than 23,000 patients at five sites

Annual budget: \$14.5 million in fiscal year ended June 30, 2010

Workforce: Almost 200, including 120 full-time employees

Chief executive officer: Robin Affrime

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and new markets tax credits designed to stimulate investment in low-income communities.

Traditional bank financing has been difficult for clinics to get because of their reliance on grant funding, said Tony Skapinsky, regional staff for Capital Link, a national nonprofit that helps community health centers access capital for building and equipment projects.

"On the other hand, a lot of financial institutions have become more comfortable with working with health centers," Skapinsky said. "The role we play is to help bridge the gap between capital and health centers."

A \$700 million round of federal financing for health center expansion projects will be announced in the next few weeks, he said. Winners will be announced in early 2012. Grants will be very competitive.

"CommuniCare, because it is shovel-ready, with development plans and cost estimates, should be highly competitive for that program," Skapinsky said.