



Media Release

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Replacing Darnall Medical Center

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FORT HOOD, Texas – U.S. Representatives John Carter and Chet Edwards announced Sept. 29 that Department of Defense has approved their proposal to construct the new Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center in its entirety starting in 2010, rather than in two phases brought a sense of excitement to the medical center.

A new hospital at Fort Hood means better access to care, more healthcare services at Fort Hood, and pride in the work place, which translates to better customer service. Every patient, whether it is a Soldier, family member, or retiree, deserves the highest quality of healthcare.

The original five-story Darnall Army Community Hospital was built in 1964 to serve 17,000 troops stationed at Fort Hood. A two-story wrap-around addition built in 1984 expanded its capacity to support healthcare to an expanding Corps of 30,000 troops. In 2006, the community hospital was designated as a medical center.

Today, the medical center serves nearly 55,000 Soldiers, as well as about 67,000 family members and 52,000 retirees.

Military construction requires the cooperation and coordination of many agencies such as the U.S. Army Health Facility Planning Agency, Corps of Engineers, U.S. Army Medical Command, and III Corps' Directorate of Public Works. Prediger and the chief of Logistics at Darnall, Lt. Col Melvin Bishop, represent Darnall when questions come up about the project. One of those questions is location of the future medical center.

The home for the new medical center is currently projected to be across the street on the grounds of Hood Stadium. The site has its advantages: easy access via the Santa Fe gate and an area large enough to provide ample parking spaces that are currently in short supply.

“Approximately 2,900 parking spaces will be available, with designated parking areas for both patients and staff members,” said Prediger. Currently, the medical center parking areas total about 1,000 spaces..

Awarding the project and gathering information to help the designers are the first steps. Staffing models and a request for proposal are two key elements. “A request for proposal document will be released by the Corps of Engineers to all the contractors interested in the project,” Prediger said.

“The proposal will detail what we want built during Phase I. We are not going to tell the construction company how to design it, but instead what we need and where we need it,” he added.

For example, to design an organized facility, the departments within the medical center will need to be grouped. “We’d like to locate radiology near the lab, keep these groups together so we’re laying a foundation for the true design,” he said.

The new medical center design is currently not available. Prediger explained that when the project is awarded the construction company would also design the structure.

With ground breaking before the end of the year, the fate of the current medical center is in limbo. The existing building will be returned to the Fort Hood Directorate of Public Works, and there has been some consideration to bring in other units to renovate the facility and turn it into some sort of administrative facility for another agency.

According to news releases by Rep. John Carter, (R-Texas) of Round Rock and Rep. Chet Edwards, (D-Texas) of Waco, Carter and Edwards recommended that the Defense Department combine the two phases and fund them both at the same time. They said Fort Hood officials told them that the proposal would save taxpayers more than \$100 million. Carter said combining Phase I and II would be a “win for the taxpayer and our military Families, save on construction costs, and improve health services more quickly.”