



Media Release

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Replacing Darnall Medical Center
Phase I funded, Phase two waiting

By Jasmine Morales
CRDAMC Public Affairs

FORT HOOD, Texas – Part of the federal economic stimulus package signed by President Obama earlier this year provides funding of \$621 million for construction to replace the aging Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center at Fort Hood.

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.

Because of the expense of construction, the current plan is to replace the medical center in two phases: administrative and clinical.

“We know for sure that Phase I is funded in the stimulus program. One of the stipulations on the project is that physical construction is required to start no later than Sept. 30, 2010,” said Brian Prediger, chief of Facilities Management at Darnall.

“Phase I is the replacement of most of the outpatient clinics inside the medical center, the operating rooms, laboratory, radiology, and pharmacy,” said Prediger.

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. There is some discussion of a parking garage.

“Nothing’s been decided yet, but there is the potential for building a parking garage with a bridge into the outpatient clinics building,” Prediger said.

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 construction scheduled to start next year, the fate of the current medical center is in limbo. “Part of Phase II is that we have to come up with a plan on what we are going to do with the existing facility before we can finish the new medical center,” said Prediger

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. “As Phase II approaches, a final decision will need to be made about the facility,” Prediger said.

Phase II, currently a separate project for the out-years, is the construction of the inpatient tower, Emergency Department, Women’s Health Center, and administrative departments. However, Phase I might be combined with Phase II, Prediger said.

“There is consideration to provide extra funding to the existing project and combine it all into one project,” Prediger added.

“In order to for this to be possible, documentation must be approved at various levels. Currently this request is in the Congressional Appropriation Committee; it’s the very last step,” said Prediger.

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.” He stated that the majority of the Recovery Act funds remain and that those funds could be used now.

“We are presently waiting on final approval from Congress. The facility management office will need to award the project by the end of September to get it started,” said Prediger.