

Linn Parish

April 24th, 2014

\$15 million health clinic envisioned in Spokane's U-District

Consortium of major players hopes to open facility in '16



—Mike McLean

This former Peirone Produce Co. warehouse would be razed to clear a site for the new medical clinic.

A community consortium that includes some of Spokane's largest players in the health care field are planning a \$15 million primary-care clinic in Spokane's University District that would serve as a training ground for new physicians and other emerging medical professionals.

Called the Spokane Teaching Health Center, the consortium includes Washington State University, Providence Health Care, and the Empire Health Foundation. Tentatively, the clinic is being called the Spokane Teaching Health Center, though

another, permanent name likely will be chosen soon, says WSU Spokane Chancellor Lisa Brown.

Brown says the group plans to present the envisioned clinic project to the WSU Board of Regents next month and ask for \$15 million for design and construction of a 40,000-square-foot facility. Tentatively, the project is planned as a new structure that would be built on the site of the former Peirone Produce Co. warehouse, southeast of the WSU store and near the Spokane River. The warehouse would be torn down to make way for the clinic.

Brown says some predesign work for a clinic on that site already has been completed.

If the project garners Regents' approval, construction could start next year, and the clinic could open in 2016, she says.

One large thrust of the project will be to provide a training facility for new medical residents that will start practicing in Spokane this year. The consortium has secured \$900,000 in funding through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Health Resources and Services Administration for six new medical residencies in Spokane, Brown says. She says annual funding is expected to ramp up over the next three years to \$2.7 million for 18 new residencies.

While training physicians is a catalyst for the project, Brown says emerging professionals from other health care-related programs in Spokane could work there as well. Those could include students from both WSU Spokane and Eastern Washington University and could involve nurses, nurse practitioners, physical therapists, and others, she says.

In general, proponents say such a facility would allow interprofessional, team-based clinic opportunities for campus faculty and clinical staff, as well as medical residents and other health care students.

The medical residents will work at Providence Health Care facilities starting later this year. If the clinic opens in 2016 as the consortium hopes, all of those residents would begin working there at that time, Brown says.

Providence currently has national accreditation for training medical residents and would transfer that accreditation to the consortium once the clinic opens, Brown says.

A presentation on the project prepared by WSU says there are 1,600 medical residents in Washington state, but only 75 of those are here. Of those who are here, nearly half practice in family and internal medicine. WSU says that an additional 150 residencies are needed in Eastern Washington in the next 10 years to meet increasing demand.

The clinic would target treating low-income residents, including those in nearby neighborhoods, which WSU describes as the second lowest income district in the state.

- See more at: <http://www.spokanejournal.com/local-news/15-million-u-district-clinic-eyed/#sthash.2JY9CrnS.dpuf>

<http://www.spokanejournal.com/local-news/15-million-u-district-clinic-eyed/>