

\$57 million project set to bring apartments, medical complex to hospital site

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A rendering of the 120-unit apartment complex that is slated to come to the former Muhlenberg Hospital site, following approval by the Plainfield city council — Courtesy: Community Healthcare Associates/KTaylorRenderings.com

By Joshua Burd

A developer has won local approval to repurpose a shuttered hospital complex in Plainfield, where it plans to invest \$57 million to build 120 apartments and a new medical arts complex.

The firm, an affiliate of Community Healthcare Associates, said Monday that the city council had approved the adaptive reuse plan of the former Muhlenberg Hospital. The milestone clears the way for the Bloomfield-based developer to begin construction by midyear, coming a decade after the closure of the facility.

Operating as Muhlenberg Urban Renewal LLC, Community Healthcare Associates has outlined plans to develop the 186,000-square-foot medical arts complex along with the new luxury rental units. Anticipated medical uses include primary and specialty care, women's health, a diagnostic laboratory and an ambulatory surgical center, among several others.

The residential component will feature a grand lobby, multipurpose rooms, fitness center, business center, bike storage and a rooftop terrace for its 39 one-bedroom and 81 two-bedroom units, according to a news release. The units will feature high-end finishes.



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The developer has agreed to respect the historical character of the existing hospital and integrate key architectural elements into its adaptive reuse of the facility, the news release said. For the Union County city, the project is a long time coming after Muhlenberg suffered crippling losses tied to rising operating costs and lower reimbursements from insurers.

The hospital closed its doors in summer 2008 despite community protests.

“Muhlenberg Hospital was an integral part of the Plainfield community for decades,” Mayor Adrian O. Mapp said. “The project that emerged and is now set to begin will not only bring much needed medical services back to our community, it also will provide an important boost to the local economy.”

The project is expected to create 200 construction jobs and 600 permanent jobs. The news release also noted that Muhlenberg provided no tax revenue due to having been a nonprofit health care provider, but the redeveloped site is expected to generate some \$10 million in benefits to the city of Plainfield in the form of so-called Community Benefit Payments and a payment in lieu of taxes agreement.

Other services slated for the medical portion include a pharmacy, sleep center, breast center, oncology, diabetes counseling, behavioral health, a home health care agency and physical therapy.

“We are particularly gratified that Bill Colgan and his team took into consideration the concerns raised throughout the process and adapted and reconfigured their proposal to reflect them,” Mapp said. “We expect them to be good neighbors and a dynamic part of our city’s ongoing resurgence in the years to come.”

This project will be the fourth shuttered hospital conversion in New Jersey for Community Healthcare Associates, which is led by Managing Partner Bill Colgan. Previous projects include

the Barnert Hospital in Paterson, Greenville Hospital in Jersey City and the William B. Kessler Memorial Hospital in Hammonton.

“There is a vibrancy in Plainfield that attracted us to the city,” Colgan said. “While every community we have worked in has a unique personality, the residents care deeply about Plainfield and demand that new projects add to the character and safety of the neighborhoods they call home.

“The project we are bringing to the Queen City does just that.”