

Health care developer buys Kessler building

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By Elaine Rose

A northern New Jersey health care developer has bought the former William B. Kessler Memorial Hospital building in Hammonton, planning to turn it into a medical arts complex, the company announced Wednesday afternoon.

Community Healthcare Associates, of Bloomfield, said it bought the 95,000-square-foot hospital on a nearly 9-acre site on the White Horse Pike at Central Avenue. The facility will be renamed the Kessler Medical Arts Complex, managing partner E. Stephen Kirby said Wednesday afternoon.

CHA closed the sale Wednesday after nearly a year of negotiations, and renovations should begin within a week, Kirby said. At first, the new owners will concentrate on cleaning the grounds, and renovations of the building will depend on the tenants. The new Kessler complex could house physicians, senior services, medical imaging, laboratories, or sub-acute, sometimes called step-down, inpatient rooms, Kirby said. The goal is for the tenants to refer patients to each other for one-stop shopping for health care, but CHA's role will be limited to that of landlord.

"There's a lot of opportunity for deciding what's needed in the community," Kirby said. "We're very open-minded, because that's what works."

Community Healthcare Associates was formed in 2008, when the partners banded together to purchase BarnertHospital in Paterson, according to the company's website. After a \$15 million renovation, 90 percent of the space there is leased to a variety of medical providers and provides services to Paterson residents.

Kessler, which closed in 2009, is the second project for CHA, which is looking for others, Kirby said. The purchase price of Wednesday's deal was not disclosed. The main hospital and property were last assessed at about \$12.3 million, according to county tax records.