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$114M expansion Set for St. Mary's Kids Hospital.

After six years of planning, work on renovation of existing Queens facility and construction of new 90,000-square-foot pavilion groundbreaking is set for the fall.

By James Comtois

St. Mary's 97-bed inpatient center provides intensive rehabilitation, specialized medical care, and education to children challenged with catastrophic illness, severe injury, and ongoing complications of premature birth.

St. Mary's Hospital for Children, the city's largest provider of post-acute care for children, is planning a massive upgrade of its flagship facility in Queens.

After nearly six years in the planning stages, and after recently getting the needed green light from the Department of Health's Public Health Council of New York State, work will start soon on modernizing St. Mary's existing 80,000-square-foot Bayside building at 2901 216th St., and erecting a new 90,000-square-foot patient pavilion.

The total cost of the project is expected to be $114 million. Construction manager Turner Construction has scheduled site work to begin in late August and groundbreaking for the fall. Occupancy of the new building is scheduled for the end of 2012.

St. Mary's, which was founded in Manhattan's Hell's Kitchen in 1870 as the city's first children's hospital, has since become a center for aiding children seeking care after their hospital visit. The modernized facility, designed by Anshen and Allen—will provide a second home for children who need to stay anywhere from a few weeks to several months.

"This facility is for children who have long-term needs," said St. Mary's Chief Executive Jeff Frerichs, who notes that his organization cares for 4,000 children on any given day. "With clinical and information technology growing so rapidly, our current building is just too antiquated."

Planning and design work on the expansion began in 2004, in preparation for passing muster via New York's extensive certificate-of-need process.

"Medicine has evolved dramatically over the last 10-20 years, and needs of kids have involved," said Dr. Edwin Simpser, St. Mary's chief medical officer. "St. Mary's is dealing with much sicker children than ever before."

St. Mary's 97-bed inpatient center provides intensive rehabilitation, specialized medical care, and education to children challenged with catastrophic illness, severe injury, and ongoing complications of premature birth. Rather than expanding the number of patient beds, it will make more room for each one—switching from four beds per room to only one or two per room.

Other key features will include a 97-bed patient pavilion with expanded rehabilitation space, patient neighborhoods for long-term patients, family suites for overnight visitation, an enhanced indoor and outdoor rehabilitation wing, enhanced classrooms for St. Mary's onsite public school PS 23Q, an exterior entrance that includes a covered portico, and 58 new parking spaces.

Correction: The new patient pavilion St. Mary's is erecting will be 90,000 square feet. The size was misstated in an earlier version of this article.