

Buildings going up —and down — at St. Ann's Community in Irondequoit

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Irondequoit, N.Y. —

In the next two years, expect to see some major changes on the St. Ann's Community campus at 1500 Portland Ave.

If all goes as planned, a new four-story building will be going up on the Irondequoit campus and a distinctive 19-story building will be coming down.

It's part St. Ann's Community's \$75 million strategic plan, said Elizabeth Mullin-DiProsa, president and CEO.

That plan got a major boost recently with the announcement that St. Ann's has been awarded a \$17.5 million grant from the state.

This year's grants are the 12th cycle they've been awarded, Mullin-DiProsa said, and this time targeted long-term care and what is termed "right-sizing."

There were 90 applicants, statewide, for the grants, she added, and only 19 were awarded. The St. Ann's grant is also the second-largest in the state.

The grant, Mullin-DiProsa said, also shows the state understands St. Ann's current 19-story The Heritage building "will not be adequate in the long run."

The Heritage, built 1972, is not a functional up-to-date building, Mullin-DiProsa said, explaining it was never built to accommodate a skilled nursing facility, though it's largely just that today.

"When I came (to head St. Ann's) 12 years ago, there were few at The Heritage (for instance) who had walkers or wheelchairs," Mullin-DiProsa said. "It's very different now, and our elevator capacity is

maxed out. We're concerned it's not really a viable facility for future use."

Under the plan, for which there are not yet any architectural renderings, Mullin-DiProsa said, once a new building is constructed on the St. Ann's campus, adjacent to the current St. Ann's Home, The Heritage building will be demolished.

"But that's only after everyone is moved, and a good two years away," Mullin-DiProsa said.

When combined with an investment from St. Ann's, the grant will be used to:

- Build a new, four-story, state-of-the-art Transitional Care Center and expanded Palliative Care Center, all with private rooms, on the Portland Avenue campus in Irondequoit. The new building will adjoin St. Ann's Home and will be built closer to the current parking lot.

The palliative center, a partnership between the Visiting Nurse Service hospice program, currently has five beds and will be increased to 10. It is staffed 24 hours a day. The average length of stay, Mullin-DiProsa said, is four to five days, adding, "98 percent of the people in this program die here."

The transitional care center, used for patients recuperating from ailments like a stroke, hip fracture, or cardiac bypass surgery to transition from hospital to home, currently has 57 beds in St. Ann's Home and will be increased to 72 in Irondequoit, 12 in Webster. "It's a much-in-demand program," Mullin-DiProsa said.

- Build a new skilled nursing and transitional care center on St. Ann's Cherry Ridge campus in Webster to serve residents there and in the surrounding area. The new building will be attached to the main complex. There will be 60 long-term-care beds and the 12 transitional-care beds there.

Beds licensed previously in The Heritage will be used in the new facilities, and a total of 49 beds used for skilled nursing care now will be eliminated. That reduction, Mullin-DiProsa said, is expected to reduce the total financial liability, through Medicaid costs, to the state by \$3 million a year.

By the numbers

\$17.5

Amount in millions of the state grant St. Ann's Community has received toward new buildings on its Irondequoit and Webster campuses.

84

Beds that will be available, when the project is complete, for patients making the transition from hospital to home.

19

Stories in the current The Heritage building, which will be coming down in about two years.

Mullin-DiProsa said the next step is to apply for a certificate of need for the two new buildings with the state Health Department. Once that is approved, she said, St. Ann's will have to go before the planning and zoning boards of both the towns of Irondequoit and Webster for necessary site plan and other approvals. She estimated that will take nine months to a year.

Optimistically, she's projecting a fall 2010 groundbreaking for the new buildings, which should take about a year to complete. The two facilities would then open sometime in fall 2011.

The undertaking, Mullin-DiProsa said, is the largest single project St. Ann's Community has ever embarked on.

"It's change, but the response has been overwhelmingly positive," Mullin-DiProsa said. "There's a great deal of enthusiasm. And, it's great news for the local economy; there will be lots of construction jobs, and even though we will have fewer beds, we don't expect our staffing needs to change."