

CARE

Community Advocates for Responsible Expansion at Providence Holy Cross

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Valley Coalition Supports Hospital Expansion But Presses Council For Full Environmental Protections

Dozens of Valley Residents Tell Council Members That Responsible Development of Providence Holy Cross Medical Center Must Include an Environmental Impact Report

**Coalition Says Lower-Income Valley Community Deserves
Same Protections as More Affluent Neighborhoods**

Los Angeles – Community Advocates for Responsible Expansion of Providence Holy Cross Hospital (CARE) brought a large contingent of members to City Hall on Tuesday and urged the City Council to overturn a recent Planning Commission decision that would allow Providence Health and Services Corporation to expand Holy Cross Medical Center without completing an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The coalition was joined by City Councilman Richard Alarcón at a morning press conference where they expressed their support for the expansion – but pressed the Council to require an EIR from the hospital developer.

“Holy Cross has been mounting a disingenuous campaign, suggesting that I do not support expansion of the hospital,” said Councilmember Alarcón. “Nothing could be further from the truth. I support the expansion – but the hospital needs to be a good neighbor and expand responsibly. The only way we’ll know the impacts that this expansion will have, and ensure they are properly mitigated, is to have a full Environmental Impact Report. The Northeast Valley deserves the same development protections that other communities in this region receive.”

CARE, a broad and diverse coalition of civil rights, community, environmental and labor organizations, has sought an Environmental Impact Report from Providence since their expansion plans were first announced two years ago. Communities typically rely on EIRs as a safeguard against irresponsible development. Therefore, according to the coalition, Providence’s refusal to complete and submit the report would leave the Northeast Valley vulnerable to unforeseen environmental impacts. Moreover, they argued, in approving the project, the Planning Commission has failed in its duty to protect the community from potentially significant environmental impacts.

“We look forward to – and need – the expansion of Providence Holy Cross Medical Center. Nonetheless, we expect any developer, and especially a hospital, to expand responsibly and safeguard the health and well-being of the public. This means completing an EIR,” said Wayde Hunter, President of the North Valley Coalition of Concerned Citizens.

Providence Holy Cross Medical Center is owned by Providence Health & Services (PH&S), a 26-hospital company based in Seattle. The company is planning a \$143 million, 136-bed expansion on its current site that includes a 97-foot-high patient tower that would be built on a site zoned for a maximum of 45 feet. The hospital also wants to build the new tower only 7 feet from the street, while the zoning regulation requires a 25-foot setback. Additionally, traffic and parking congestion around the hospital has long been a source of contention in the community, and the expansion is expected to exacerbate the difficulties.

At the press conference and in individual meetings with Council members, the coalition stressed the fact that developers like Providence typically assume Environmental Impact Reports will be required for projects in higher-income communities such as Santa Monica, Santa Clarita and Beverly Hills. Major hospital expansion projects have taken place in those communities over the past several years, and in each case, the developers submitted Environmental Impact Reports. In this case, however, according to CARE, Providence refuses to commission an EIR because it feels less accountable for how it conducts business in the low-income, predominantly minority Northeast Valley.

“Providence Health and Services has failed to complete an EIR for almost two years now, despite the fact that this community has consistently requested one. This disregard for the voice of Northeast Valley residents stands in sharp contrast with the precedent some other hospitals have established in higher-income communities across the region,” said Maria Loya, Director of Public Policy for the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy, a member of CARE.

Underscoring this point, CARE presented findings at the press conference regarding a series of hospital development projects – big and small – carried out in Los Angeles and Orange Counties over the past ten years. All of these projects, including Cedar-Sinai in Beverly Hills, UCLA Medical Center in Westwood and Hoag Hospital in Newport Beach, were accompanied by an EIR. Most of the cited communities have substantially higher median incomes and significantly fewer minority residents than the immediate zip code area in which Providence Medical Center is located.

CARE and other critics argue that while Providence’s refusal is inconsistent with current regional and statewide practices, it parallels a tradition of disrespect for the voice of Northeast Valley residents by developers.

“CARE and this community support the expansion, but Providence should be willing to put in place the same protections for the Northeast Valley community as other developers have done in more affluent communities. We need the City Council to make sure Providence provides those protections,” said Linda Wiggins, a Northeast Valley resident and member of CARE.

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