

BR
Health
District
*moving
fast*

*Hundreds of millions in
investments coming to Essen,
Bluebonnet*

By David Jacobs



OLOL Children's Hospital is under construction in the health district.

Cancer is the second-leading cause of death in the United States, exceeded only by heart disease. But chemotherapy and radiation treatments can damage healthy organs and tissues along with the tumor, making the cure seem almost worse than the disease.

That's why cancer researchers and health care providers seek ways to target the tumor cells directly while sparing the healthy cells. One of those options, proton beam therapy, is on its way to the Baton Rouge Health District.

In May, Gov. John Bel Edwards and Provident Resources Group CEO Steve Hicks announced plans for the Louisiana ProtonCare Center. The \$85 million project, to be built near the intersection of interstates 10 and 12, is expected to begin treating patients in late 2019.

The proton center announcement is perhaps the biggest win so far for the District, which seeks to improve the Baton Rouge area's health outcomes while drawing more health care customers from outside the region.

"It's a great piece to solidify Baton Rouge as a destination for health care," says Suzy Sonnier, executive director of the Baton Rouge Health District. "We certainly hope that it will be one of many others."

The project is part of a wave of more than \$450 million in investments planned for the area along the Essen Lane, Perkins Road, Bluebonnet Boulevard corridor. A master plan adopted by parish government is blending all that new stuff with what's already there, creating something greater than the sum of its parts.

A decade ago, proton therapy centers were rare. Today, there are about two dozen nationwide, with a few more on the way.

Provident ProtonCare is a division of Provident Resources

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation paid for and oversaw a plan to create the Baton Rouge Health District. A nonprofit with the same name has started implementing the plan, which was requested by the city-parish and is a part of FuturEBR, the parish's comprehensive master plan. For more, visit brhealthdistrict.org.

BRHD PROJECTS

PROTON RADIATION CANCER THERAPY The district has teamed up with Provident Resources Group to bring an \$85 million advanced proton therapy center to Baton Rouge by late 2019. The center, which is expected to employ 95 people, will utilize a proton therapy that destroys tumor cells with a targeted dose of radiation that spares healthy tissue and organs.

INFRASTRUCTURE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN The district has hired WHLC Architecture to craft guidelines for landscaping, signage, design and other physical characteristics, in hopes of creating a coherent sense of place for the district. The plan could be ready by the end of the summer.

COMMUNITY HEALTH DATA BRHD is working with the Blue Cross Blue Shield Institute, pulling together public- and private-sector data to identify clusters of chronic disease and health care service gaps in the Baton Rouge area. Once the information is ready to present, district members hope to work with relevant community partners and clinics to raise awareness and improve health outcomes.

RESILIENT BATON ROUGE PROJECT District members are working with the Baton Rouge Area Foundation to address mental and behavioral health needs in the wake of last year's unprecedented flood, funded by an \$800,000 grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

NURSE RECRUITMENT The district coalition is working with the Baton Rouge Area Chamber to craft a message that hopefully will attract experienced nurses with local roots who currently work out of state. A recruitment effort will begin this fall.

ANTI-MICROBIAL STEWARDSHIP The more antibiotic medications are used, the less effective they become. A district task force is working on recommendations to address this problem at the community level.

SHARED SERVICES District representatives meet regularly to discuss opportunities to reduce costs by creating economies of scale. Shared services could include laundry, security, maintenance and lab work, among others.



Above: Aerial looking North
 Below: Approach to Bluebonnet from South/West-bound I-10
 Right: Existing condition



The Health District has hired WHLC to write design guidelines. WHLC envisions gateways for the district.



Tim Mueller

Steve E. Hicks, Chairman & CEO of Provident Resources Group Inc., is partnering to build an \$85 million proton radiation cancer treatment center in Baton Rouge.

Group, Hicks explains. While he had discussed a Baton Rouge proton center with Baton Rouge Area Foundation leaders as far back as 2008, the Louisiana ProtonCare Center arguably was birthed last October in a meeting with Foundation Executive Vice President John Spain.

Bringing competitors together for a common goal isn't easy, as Hicks knows firsthand. A similar project he worked on in Cleveland fell apart when the providers who would have used it couldn't reach an agreement, he says.

While Provident is involved in projects around the country, Baton Rouge is the company's home. Hicks wanted the Louisiana ProtonCare Center to be a community asset, rather than a tool for a single provider.

Provident ProtonCare will build and finance the project with

bonds. At press time, a specific site had not been announced. Provident's partner, Ion Beam Applications, will provide proton therapy technology.

When the bonds are retired, hopefully in less than 20 years, Provident plans to donate the project to the Foundation for the benefit of the Baton Rouge Health District. "That's our commitment to our hometown," Hicks says. "I'm not doing that anywhere else."

While it's not for every type of cancer, he says the technology has been shown most effective in treating cancer in children. It uses a precise beam, or "pencil beam scanning," to target and eliminate the tumor without damaging nearby tissue and organs. Years of treatments for side effects can be avoided.

"There's either no, or substantially less, collateral damage,"

Hicks says.

A SENSE OF PLACE

The Essen/Bluebonnet corridor has long been a health care center for Baton Rouge. The local health district concept dates back to the approval of FuturEBR, the parish's master plan, in 2011.

But the Baton Rouge Health District doesn't have a distinctive look or character. If someone from out of town drives through it, they wouldn't know they're in any specific neighborhood.

Baton Rouge-based WHLC Architecture has worked in the health care sector for 30-plus years, including projects for Baton Rouge Health District members such as the Baton Rouge General, Our Lady of the Lake, Baton Rouge Clinic and the Pennington Biomedical Research Center.

WHLC recently was chosen to create the district's Infrastructure Implementation Plan.

The plan would establish design strategies for the district's physical infrastructure, including signage, lighting, landscaping, sidewalks, bike paths, and everything else drivers, walkers and bikers experience, explains WHLC principal Rex Cabaniss.

"It becomes a guidebook for how best to develop the area," he says.

The finished plan has three primary goals: 1) as the district grows, district leaders want to make sure the development is high quality; 2) they want to foster a sense of shared community, so that the district is an inviting place to live, work and play; and 3) they'd like it to be a model district for healthy living. It's a "health district," after all, so it should foster a healthy lifestyle.

For example, WHLC is working with BREC and the city-parish on the Ward's Creek bike path, part of a larger "health loop" for Baton Rouge, Cabaniss says. "As it passes through the health district, we want it to be the best example of what a nature-friendly bike trail can be," he adds.

Cabaniss envisions a clear entry point or "gateway" to the district, while also focusing attention on improving key intersections. When visitors enter the district, he wants them to feel that they've entered an environment where they can expect to receive first-class health care.

"The building blocks of any city are the streets, the lighting, the signage, and the landscape," he says. "It's just bringing all of those into cohesive components of character for the area, so it feels a little different." •

INVESTMENTS, BY THE NUMBERS

More than \$450 million worth of health care, real estate and infrastructure investment is expected in the Baton Rouge Health District over the next three years, including:

OUR LADY OF THE LAKE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

\$230 million; anticipated opening: Fall 2019

MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL, OFFICE AND RETAIL PROJECT BY DANTIN BRUCE DEVELOPMENT

PHASE 1: \$25-\$27 million; anticipated opening: March 2018

PHASE 2: \$35 million; anticipated opening: Late 2019

MARRIOTT ELEMENT HOTEL

\$18-\$23 million; anticipated opening: Late 2018

BATON ROUGE GENERAL CRITICAL CARE TOWER AND REGIONAL BURN CENTER

\$40 million; anticipated opening: 2019

DIJON EXTENSION AND MIDWAY DRIVE

\$23 million; anticipated completion: Summer 2019

LOUISIANA PROTON CARE CENTER

\$85 million; anticipated opening: Late 2019