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Provident plans \$85 million proton therapy center in Baton Rouge

Advocate staff report **MAY 10, 2017 - 9:45 AM**

An \$85 million proton radiation cancer therapy center will be built in Baton Rouge by Provident ProtonCare, a division of Provident Resources Group.

The Louisiana ProtonCare Center, projected to open near the end of 2019, will be located near the junction of Interstates 10 and 12, and will be the latest addition to the Baton Rouge Health District. The center's proton therapy uses a targeted, high-energy dose of radiation to destroy tumor cells.

Clinical partners in a collaborative venture with the center are Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center, Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center, Baton Rouge General and Woman's Hospital. They will serve as a regional network giving patient's access to the center in cases in which proton therapy treatment is applicable.

The center will create 95 jobs, with with an average salary of \$105,000, plus benefits. Louisiana Economic Development estimates the project will result in another 101 indirect jobs.

Provident ProtonCare will receive an incentive package from the state that includes a \$1 million performance-based grant, payable in five annual installments beginning in 2021. Provident also can access the LED FastStart workforce training program and is expected to use Louisiana's Quality Jobs Program.

The project announcement was made by Provident Resources Group Chairman and CEO Steve Hicks and Gov. John Bel Edwards.

Other organizations involved in landing the center are the Baton Rouge Area Foundation and Baton Rouge Area Chamber.

Provident will fund the nonprofit therapy center and own it for 20 years, after which Provident will donate the facility to the Baton Rouge Area Foundation as a permanent asset in the Baton Rouge Health District.

The plan is for Provident to finance, own and operate the center through a special purpose entity. Hicks said Provident will issue tax exempt and taxable bonds to finance the center. The medical centers will form a joint venture to handle clinical operations and patient treatment.

Hicks said Provident will donate the treatment center to BRAF after the facility is paid off as a way of supporting the community it is based out of. "We're not doing this in any other market, but Baton Rouge is our home town," he said.

"We're excited to add this new cancer-treatment technology that will allow our citizens to receive care in the Baton Rouge Health District rather than going out of state," said Executive Vice President John Spain of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.

"It has been our vision and a mission of Provident over the past decade to bring this amazing technology to Louisiana and the Capital Region to serve the citizens of our state and region, and to treat cancer," Hicks said.

Provident ProtonCare is establishing proton therapy centers across the country, with a facility under construction in Atlanta, where Provident is entering into a clinical agreement with Emory University's Winship Cancer Institute. Due in part to the



collaboration of health care and economic development partners in Louisiana, the company's plans to locate a facility in Baton Rouge placed the capital city high on Provident's priority list for new investments, Hicks said.

Provident assembled a national team for the development of its proton therapy centers, with expertise in the construction, design and financing of facilities. The project team includes Gilbane Development Co., Stantec Architects and Citigroup Global Markets. Provident's long-term partner Ion Beam Applications SA will provide proton therapy technology, the Proteus Plus system, for the ProtonCare Center.

Construction of the center will begin in 2018. Hiring for the 95 positions will begin in 2019, with full employment expected by 2021. Final negotiations for the center's property location in the Baton Rouge Health District are underway and nearing a conclusion.

"Louisiana's most valuable asset is her people, and their health is of great importance to us. With that in mind, it is crucial that the best treatments are available to them," Edwards said.

"This center will not only provide optimum care and hope for patients, but it will be a great asset to the economic development of the capital city," said Baton Rouge Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome.

Founded in 1999, Provident Resources Group is a national nonprofit involved in the creation, ownership and operation of education, health care, senior living and multifamily housing facilities and services.

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