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\$350M in projects set for West Side

By Devon Lash
and Elizabeth Kim
Staff Writers

STAMFORD — Stamford Hospital and Charter Oak Communities announced Tuesday they will direct \$350 million to a new Emergency Department and public housing complexes on the city's West Side.

"For the first time, these two

Hospital, housing group join forces, funds

essential community organizations — the hospital and Charter Oak — will collaborate and direct resources toward a major commitment to the renewal of the West Side," said Richard Fox, executive director of Charter Oak Communi-

ties, formerly the Stamford Housing Authority.

Fox spoke at a news conference at Stamford Hospital with hospital officials.

The news marked the hospital's first public announcement about

its expansion plan since it began intensifying efforts to buy neighboring properties last year. Since November 2007, it has spent about \$24.1 million buying real estate, according to city records.

Representatives from Charter

Oak said the collaboration represents a practical arrangement — the two entities both own properties adjacent to one another. By working together and exchanging parcels of land, they can improve the overall design of their individual projects, Fox said.

David Smith, senior vice president of strategy and market devel-

Please see **WEST SIDE**, Page A4

opment for the hospital, said the first stage of the hospital's redevelopment will cost \$200 million. Scheduled for July 2010, it will include an expanded Emergency Department with ancillary support services, public amenities and a concourse connecting the new building to the existing facility, he said.

"The emergency room was designed for less volume than it has now," Smith said. In the 2008 fiscal year, more than 45,000 patients visited Stamford Hospital's Emergency Department.

The new six-level Emergency Department will be located in what is now a parking lot south of the Carl and Dorothy Bennett Cancer Center. The expansion will nearly double its number of exam and treatment rooms, from 21 to 40, according to the hospital's application to the state Office of Health

Phase 1 will include 330,000 gross square feet of new construction, the application states.

Scott Orstad, hospital spokesman, said WHR Architects, based in Houston, which focuses on designing buildings for health care, has been chosen to design the space.

Smith said the hospital is taking a conservative financial approach by funding the project with proceeds from the upcoming sale of Edgemoor Continuing Care Retirement Community as well as the hospital's operating income.

"Bank credit and philanthropy are not realities right now," he said.

The Charter Oak redevelopment project aims to replace aging public housing units at Fairfield Court and Vidal Court with 440 new architect-designed homes targeted to a mix of income levels, officials said.

Fairfield Court is under construction and expected to be completed in 2009, and Vidal Court is in the planning stages. The plan also includes investing in retail space along Stillwater Avenue, said Vin Tufo, director of development for Charter Oak Communities.

The Fairfield Court project has created 440 jobs, Tufo said.

The cost of both housing developments is projected to be about \$130 million, he said, and will be paid for with federal Hope VI funds, city and state money, and private funding.

The hospital and Charter Oak have the support of two West Side advocacy organizations: the Stamford Partnership and the West Side Neighborhood Revitalization Zone.

The Rev. Richard Futie, president of the West Side group, said that as long as the hospital and Charter Oak remain transparent and open about the process, the residents of the West Side will "give everything the benefit of a doubt."

The next step for the hospital's project, Smith said, is to file applications with city regulatory boards, a process that expected in spring.

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