

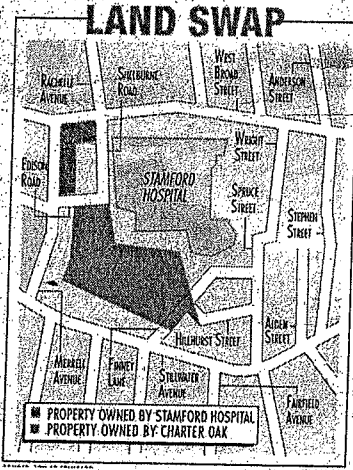
# Hospital to trade land with housing agency

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**STAMFORD** — Stamford Hospital and the city's housing authority have signed a letter of intent to swap land to improve their respective developments on the West Side, hospital President Brian Grissler said.

As part of the exchange, the hospital would give the housing authority residential properties it owns along Shelburne Road and Merrell Avenue in return for a more than 2-acre swath of property between Merrell Avenue and Finney Lane owned by Charter Oak, the city's

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The shaded areas represent a general outline of the land owned. Some properties may be in the process of being acquired. The boundaries are based on renderings from Charter Oak, the city's housing authority.

## Land

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housing authority.

The two organizations announced a possible property exchange at a news conference last month but did not disclose the parcels involved. Maps delineating the proposed exchange emerged last week during a presentation by a planning consultant for Charter Oak before the city's planning board, as well as at a meeting between hospital officials and The Advocate.

The exchange would give the hospital an extra acre on which to rebuild its aging facilities, for a total of about 30 acres. For Charter Oak, it would mean the opportunity to develop a continuous stretch of street-front property on Merrell Avenue.

Hospital officials called the collaboration a "win-win situation."

During a meeting with The Advocate, Grissler and members of his staff unveiled the first three phases of a plan to rebuild its older facilities and expand its campus.

The first phase of construction, which may begin as early as spring of 2010, will result in a new central utility plant along with a new five-story building on what is now a parking lot south of the Carl and Dorothy Bennett Cancer Center. Although all the departments would eventually move into the new building, the priority is to make space for a new emergency department and pediatric emergency unit on the ground floor. A new emergency department is a critical priority, hospital officials said. The current department, built in 1974, was designed to accommodate about 12,000 visits a year. In the fiscal year 2007, 44,613 people visited the emergency department, according to a report by the Office of Health

Care Access, the state's regulatory body for hospitals.

Grissler said the hospital has raised \$220 million for the first phase, which he estimated as being completed as early as 2013.

Future phases would add six stories to the new complex and slowly shape the hospital campus.

On Tuesday, planning board members viewed initial site plans for Charter Oak's development, Vidal Court. The quasi-public agency, which has been trying to incorporate more for-profit enterprises, is planning to create a mixed-income community along Merrell and Stillwater Avenue that includes apartments and townhouses as well as ground floor retail.

Rick Redniss, planning consultant on the project, presented two scenarios of the housing authority development, one assuming the property swap occurs and another that assumes it does not.

Afterward, Planning Board Chairman Duane Hill said it might be helpful for board members to see "a broader picture." Though both parties have trumpeted their collaboration, they have yet to present a comprehensive picture of the changes sought for the West Side as a result of both developments.

One reason may be timing. Hospital officials said they are about a month away from submitting a city land-use application for the first phase.

Board members, meanwhile, are set to deliberate on Charter Oak's application at their next meeting.

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