

Feasibility Assessment - Fact Summary

I have to go to the mainland to see three different specialists. I can never seem to coordinate their appointments, so each visit takes a full day and another ferry ticket, and I lose a full day of work each time.

The challenges of having to rely so heavily on off-island healthcare affect Islanders of all ages. And the Inter Island Medical Center is facing mounting space and financial difficulties, struggling to continue to provide the high quality of service that the community needs and expects. A way needs to be found to make available more on-Island healthcare services. One proposed solution would be a new integrated medical center offering larger clinic space, some outpatient services, and limited inpatient care. Since January 2008, an assessment has been undertaken to evaluate whether our local Hospital District and PeaceHealth, a not-for-profit healthcare provider which operates St. Joseph Hospital in Bellingham, WA, might form a relationship to create and operate an integrated medical center for the Island. The findings of the study are summarized below. For a more detailed overview – or the full report – contact the Hospital District Board Secretary at 360.378.5152.

Conclusion and recommendation:

1) Conclusion: The assessment team believes that a viable relationship opportunity exists between the Hospital District and PeaceHealth to expand healthcare services on the Island through development of an integrated medical center.

2) Recommendation: It is the recommendation of the assessment team that the Hospital District and PeaceHealth Boards approve and execute a non-binding Letter of Intent to continue the investigation of a long-term relationship to build and operate an integrated medical center on San Juan Island. Final Agreements, if reached, will also require the approval of the Hospital District and PeaceHealth Boards.

Services:

The integrated medical center would offer an enhanced clinic facility providing expanded primary care services. Outpatient procedures would be provided primarily through visiting specialists who would come to the island for regularly scheduled visits. Potential outpatient services would be available, for example, in areas such as dermatology; hearing and speech examination, therapy, and aid services; colonoscopy; allergy evaluation and treatment; cataract procedures; chemotherapy; pain management; and hernia repair. Expanded diagnostic services including CT scan, bronchoscopy, and mobile MRI would be available.

My 80 year old dad needs a bi-weekly CT scan on his fractured leg. The ferry ride seems to take forever and is really hard for him and for us too.

Limited potential inpatient services would include, for example, medical cardiology, gastroenterology, ophthalmology, seizure/epilepsy, and medical oncology.

A number of services would *NOT* be available at the integrated medical center including, for example, complex outpatient surgeries; inpatient surgery; cosmetic surgery; labor and delivery; back, neck, cardiac, or brain surgery; and bone marrow or stem cell procedures.

The proposed integrated medical center facility:

The proposed facility would have a total of 42,242 sq. ft. of which 24,492 would be clinic space, and 17,750 would be used for emergency department, outpatient and inpatient services. It would be a 10-bed facility to serve a variety of patient needs.

Staffing:

Increased staff would be needed to provide expanded clinic care, as well as 24-hour emergency and acute care. Careful analysis was done of how many physicians, nurses, and other staff including office staff would be needed based on conservatively projected patient use of the integrated medical center. Visiting specialists would be highly qualified and would include experienced physicians with mainland practices. Recruiting and staffing would be enabled by PeaceHealth's national reputation and healthcare services in Bellingham.

Cost:

The cost for building the integrated medical center is projected at \$29.8 million: \$22.8 million for the building and \$7million for medical, technical and other equipment. This estimate includes costs for site studies, architectural design services, construction, insurance and legal costs, project management, fees, and other building expenses including sales tax.

I grew up on the island; this place is my home. I have 3 kids and need to visit a mainland doctor. Do I take the children or pay for a full day of babysitting? And the ferry costs?

Financing, building and operating the proposed integrated medical center:

The preliminary capital budget and financial model indicate that no additional taxes would be required to pay for the building or operation.

Building costs would be covered by philanthropy (approx. \$10million), and contribution by PeaceHealth (approx. \$7million for all medical and other equipment, furnishings, information technology), with the remaining funding through a "limited tax, general obligation bond," repaid using the current \$1.4 million tax levy. Dollars remaining from the current levy after debt service would be used to cover charity care for Island residents. Operation of the integrated medical center would be the responsibility of PeaceHealth.

Governance:

Governance and oversight of the integrated medical center would be provided through a local Governing Board, operating with delegated authority from the PeaceHealth Board. This board would be responsible for overseeing the quality, operations, and performance of the new medical center. The Board would consist of a majority of members from the community, as well as representatives from the Hospital District Board and PeaceHealth.

Validity of report findings and data:

Data presented in the feasibility report represent conservative estimates based on actual, historic and current use of both Island and mainland healthcare providers and facilities by Island residents. Projected costs and activities were verified by comparing data from similar communities and healthcare facilities and environments. National and professional standards guided estimates of, for example, space needs. Great effort was made to assure that the data are realistic.