

Jerold Phelps Community Hospital Existing Condition Assessment A Case for Replacement Modern Healthcare Facilities

Since its beginning in the mid-1950s, the Jerold Phelps Community Hospital has been providing much needed healthcare for Southern Humboldt County residents. The facility was initially an expansion to the founding doctor's house and expanded over the next few decades with new building additions and hospital services. However, as hospital buildings age, they become less able to keep up with quickly evolving healthcare technology, spatial needs, and adaptability to new approaches for patient safety, staff efficiency, and infrastructure support. This is the issue that Jerold Phelps Community Hospital currently faces.

Typically, hospitals begin to experience the limitations of their aging facilities after about 25 to 30 years. Under ideal planning conditions, some hospitals and outpatient clinics anticipate this aging timeline and plan for flexible use and adaptable building system infrastructure. Hospitals in California face additional challenges to meet the upcoming seismic compliance deadline in 2030 to either modernize and seismically strengthen their structural and utilities capabilities or replace their facilities with modern construction. The Jerold Phelps Community Hospital, approaching its 75th anniversary, is not in a condition to enable modernization, growth or seismic compliance for the following reasons.

The physical infrastructure of a hospital serves as the foundation for effective and safe patient care. The rising cost of deferred maintenance and repairs with an older structure is a current issue. Significant upgrades to maintain functionality of the mechanical and electrical systems including HVAC, boilers, chillers, and electrical distribution. Aging medical gas pipelines, life safety systems, and infection prevention systems (like filtration) are becoming obsolete before the building structure itself.

The existing hospital's growth and expansion over the years have been sequential resulting in disconnected service adjacencies and compromised patient and staff flow patterns. Patient privacy and staff work zones overlap impacting efficient patient care and the ability to preserve patient dignity. The existing hospital cannot easily grow to address these needs as there is limited, available land for services expansion.

Rooms are undersized for clearance and access. Departmental programmatic and functional needs cannot be met. Growing regulatory and compliance risks and inability to fully integrate modern technology are a concern. Mid-20th-century layouts are frequently unsuitable for 21st-century patient care needs, necessitating renovations for better patient flow and technological integration. This includes data cabling, outdated imaging, and older patient monitoring, for example, which are often replaced long before the building shell reaches its end.

With the increase of community healthcare needs, Southern Humboldt Community Healthcare District and SoHum Health faced a decision milestone on whether or not to invest more in the original hospital building or build a replacement modernized hospital and clinic for the future of healthcare services for Southern Humboldt County. It is with the above reasons that SHCHD and SoHum Health along with its healthcare architectural and engineering team determined that the Jerold Phelps Community Hospital is beyond its useful life and that the best scenario for the future of healthcare services for the Southern Humboldt County community is to design and construct a new modern replacement hospital and clinic.



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