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## Children's hospital to grow

**\$48M expansion needed for 4-year-old hospital; Beck Group to build**

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Administrators hope to cut the ribbon on a new section in 2013. Work starts in November.

Dell Children's Medical Center of Central Texas is moving forward on a \$48 million tower expansion that will accommodate more patients and make room for its growing specialty programs and associated physicians.

The planned 72-bed tower is the first major expansion for the hospital since it opened in 2007, said Sister Teresa George, vice president and chief operating officer of Dell Children's. In 2008, the hospital expanded its emergency room department to meet the greater than anticipated demand.

About half of the \$48 million expansion will be funded through the sale of hospital-issued bonds, while the remainder will come through fundraising.

After competitive bidding, Dell Children's selected Dallas-based The Beck Group to build the new 82,994-square-foot tower, which was designed by Polkinghorn Group Architects Inc. of Austin. CCRD Partners, Bury+Partners Inc. and Datum Engineering Inc. will provide engineering services.

Brian Horras, project manager for Beck, said the new tower will seek LEED platinum health care certification. It will be architecturally similar to the existing towers, Horras said, adding that the company is incorporating design lessons learned since the older towers were built. Seton Healthcare Family, which owns Dell Children's, plans to break ground in November and finish the project by 2013.

While a third bed tower has always been part of the long-term plan for the hospital, Dell Children's is moving forward ahead of schedule.

"The plan was to have a third tower probably in six or seven years, but we are starting this a little early because of community demand," George said.

The population growth in Central Texas, coupled with Austin's younger population, is driving demand at Dell Children's, which has a 46-county service area. Dell Children's has seen fast growth in its pediatric specialty programs, including the Comprehensive Epilepsy Program, which is a Level IV program, the top designation in this category. Other programs growing rapidly are neurology and cardiology.

Dell Children's has brought more than 50 pediatric specialists into the community since it opened. At the same time, Seton's affiliation with the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center has attracted top physicians, including Dr. Tim George, Dell Children's medical director of the Pediatric Neurosurgery Center, and Dr. Dave Clarke, who leads Dell Children's Comprehensive Epilepsy Program.

Oncology is another growing specialty for the hospital as more families choose to stay in Austin for cancer treatment.

Although the new tower will primarily house patient beds, there will be some office space dedicated to children's psychological and psychiatric services.

While Dell Children's has plenty of room for growth on its 32-acre campus, the third tower might be the only major expansion the hospital will see for years. Over the longer term, Seton is considering adding more parking, and is in talks with developers about medical office space, George said.

The growth of specialty programs at Dell Children's has resulted in a need for medical office space to house specialists and their teams. The area's only medical office building is almost fully occupied, George said, adding that she is hopeful that a new multi-specialty medical office building, with lab space and imaging equipment, could be on the ground in three to five years.

Dell Children's, which is beating its own expectations, won't be the only children's hospital in the region for long. Scott & White Healthcare is building a children's hospital in Temple, which is opening this fall. This month, the health care system announced that it will partner with the famed Texas Children's Hospital in Houston.

Scott & White expects the partnership to lead to more collaboration between Texas Children's and Scott & White, and Baylor College of Medicine and Texas A&M Health Science Center College of Medicine.

With the looming competition, George believes that demand for Seton's services will remain high and that the region will benefit from expanded pediatric services.

The goal for Dell Children's is "to grow its specialty programs and increase the continuum of care it provides," George said.

**Courtesy of JB Goodwin**