

Methodist University Hospital Breaks Ground on \$280 Million Expansion

By Andy Meek

With a row of hardhats and shovels arranged neatly in front of him, Dr. David Stern reflected Wednesday, Oct. 5, on the significance of the \$280 million construction project underway nearby on the campus of Methodist University Hospital.

“It’s too simplistic to say build it, and they will come,” said Stern, executive dean for the University of Tennessee Health Science Center’s College of Medicine, about Methodist’s master campus plan for its flagship hospital. “But I can tell you that without a world-class facility, you can’t make it a place that patients want to come (to) and doctors we recruit from all over the world, that they want to come as well.”

Stern was speaking on the occasion of Methodist formally breaking ground on the project at the corner of Eastmoreland Avenue and Bellevue Boulevard. Expected to be finished in early 2019, the modernization project includes a new 440,000-square-foot tower that will create room to upgrade services within the hospital.

According to Methodist, the upgrade of services includes a consolidation of oncology, transplant and outpatient programs into a new centralized area that will increase efficiency for medical staff and caregivers and create a better overall experience for patients, family and visitors.

Among other highlights of the \$280 million master campus plan, it will combine the West Cancer Center on Union Avenue with hospital-based inpatient and surgical services, creating one comprehensive cancer center.

“Five years ago, we started a partnership with Methodist University and with the University of Tennessee to make a cancer center so Memphis patients didn’t have to go anywhere – they could stay at home and get wonderful care,” said Dr. Kurt Tauer, senior partner and chief of staff at West Cancer Center. “The first stake went out at Wolf River. That’s our beautiful east facility. Today, what we’re breaking on and what will be in this tower is an incredible cancer center that will be right Downtown, uniting all of Memphis so we can take care of all of Memphis.”

Other aspects of the project include:



Methodist University Hospital held an official ground-breaking event Wednesday, Oct. 5, for its \$280 million campus master plan at the corner of Eastmoreland Avenue and Bellevue Boulevard.

(Daily News/Andy Meek)

- Consolidating all transplant services into a two-floor inpatient/outpatient comprehensive Transplant Institute.
- Consolidating outpatient care in the new tower, making these services easily accessible from the newly constructed parking plaza.
- A new parking plaza with 700 spaces for access directly into the new patient tower.
- And the addition of two gardens to provide green space and a calm, healing environment.

The hospital's transplant program – for which an anonymous gift provided last year is being used on research for transplant patients and on elevating the patient experience – is a key part of the project. And the expanded facilities and improved technology that come as a result of the upgrades will help elevate that program, hospital officials said.

Methodist University Hospital, Stern said, has several functions.

“First and foremost, it cares for the residents who live in our city,” Stern said. “The second is, it's got destination programs. The stroke program at University Hospital has doubled recently. The ocular melanoma program here rivals MD Anderson in volume and outcomes ... And (there's) a terrific bone marrow transplant program.

“Methodist's investment we're celebrating today – it's really a very special thing to consider such a big investment in a Downtown metropolis like this. It creates a world-class facility which I believe every patient needs to have access to.”