

FAQ: Ben Taub Hospital Expansion

Updated 10-8-25

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Statement: Harris Health is a critical provider of healthcare and emergency services to residents of Harris County and surrounding counties. To ensure that these services are available to meet the needs of the population of Houston, Harris County and the greater southeast Texas region, it is necessary for Harris Health to expand Ben Taub Hospital so that it can provide the increased patient bed capacity necessary to serve the essential trauma, emergency and healthcare needs of all residents.

In 2023, Harris County voters overwhelmingly approved Harris Health's \$2.5 billion bond package to fund its multi-year strategic facilities plan, which authorized the expansion of patient bed capacity at Ben Taub Hospital. To accomplish this mandate, Harris Health plans to expand the hospital's patient bed capacity by building approximately 100 additional private patient rooms through the construction of an addition on park land adjacent to Ben Taub Hospital.

The Need to Expand

Why does Harris Health need to expand the patient bed capacity at Ben Taub Hospital?

Today, Ben Taub Hospital is consistently operating beyond its maximum patient capacity (402 beds). When demand exceeds capacity, patients are often placed in temporary hallway locations throughout the hospital until a room becomes available. While not ideal, these hallway patients receive necessary physician and nursing attention as they wait for a room. Additionally, this requires the hospital to frequently alert Houston Fire Department and EMS partners to take patients to other hospitals because of patient overcrowding. A concerted effort is made to keep trauma care access always available for the community.

How much more capacity is needed?

Based on an extensive analysis relating to needs, patient volume and increased population, Harris Health expects Ben Taub Hospital to see a demand for an additional 18,000 (22% more) emergency visits by 2031 that will require additional patient bed capacity for another 3,200 admissions. The lack of adequate patient bed capacity significantly affects the hospital's availability for patients needing crucial services from emergency to intensive care. Adding 100 patient rooms will extend the useful life of Ben Taub Hospital by 10-15 years or more before a complete replacement is likely to be funded.

Why can't Harris Health just build a new hospital?

To build a complete hospital replacement would likely require more than \$2.5 billion to complete. Harris Health is not in a financial position to do this today. In 2023, voters approved a \$2.5 billion bond to add a new hospital to the LBJ Hospital campus, expand Ben Taub Hospital, and add community clinics. This bond represents Harris Health's maximum

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borrowing capacity. Approximately \$410 million from the voter-approved bond package allows Harris Health to expand patient bed capacity at Ben Taub Hospital, which will help extend its useful life for 10-15 years or more. When Harris Health has completed paying for its current bond, the system may consider asking voters for potential funding for a replacement facility for Ben Taub Hospital.

Related to the \$2.5 billion bond package approved by voters, is the expansion of Ben Taub optional?

No. As part of the bond package approved by voters in 2023, the public was told about the need to extend the life of Ben Taub Hospital and expand patient bed capacity to continue serving the community. The \$410 million investment to expand the hospital must be used for that specific purpose. The only viable way to expand Ben Taub Hospital is by purchase through eminent domain of city-owned park land adjacent to the hospital and directly across from its emergency and trauma center.

Land Identified for Ben Taub Expansion

Where is the land that Harris Health wants to acquire?

Harris Health has identified 8.9 acres of city-owned park property for the expansion of Ben Taub Hospital. This property is located directly across from the Ben Taub Hospital emergency and trauma center, and is bordered by Lamar Fleming Avenue, Cambridge Street and South Braeswood Boulevard.

Does Harris Health's plan to expand Ben Taub Hospital use land that is part of the Hermann Park Golf Course, Houston Zoo, Miller Outdoor Theater or other park attractions?

No. The proposed parcels of land are directly across from the Ben Taub Hospital emergency and trauma center and separated from the main attractions of the park by Cambridge Street and do not affect any access to the core park attractions. The land will be used to build more patient rooms for Ben Taub Hospital. Although this property is part of Hermann Park, it represents less than 2% of the park's 445 acres.

Why can't the expansion occur on the campus of Ben Taub Hospital?

Unfortunately, it is not a viable option to expand Ben Taub Hospital on the existing site. There is virtually no space to accommodate any new construction or expansion. Additionally, building on top of the existing hospital is out of the question because of the dated condition of the existing building. Importantly, any additional construction on the site would likely prompt service closures within the busy Level I trauma hospital and its outpatient specialty facilities, and endanger the safety of patients, visitors and staff who would likely be in an active construction site for several years.

Why is Harris Health considering the purchase of park land and not opting to acquire another property?

The proximity of this property to Ben Taub Hospital makes it uniquely suitable for construction of much-needed patient beds in a potential hospital addition to be directly connected to Ben Taub Hospital via a sky bridge. Having the addition connected to the hospital gives patients access to all of the specialties and expertise available at a Level I trauma hospital and makes staffing and support of the new structure easier and more efficient.

The Process to Acquire the Land

What is the process for acquiring the land?

If approved by both the Harris Health Board of Trustees and the Harris County Commissioners Court, following a Chapter 26 public hearing, Harris Health would purchase at fair market value through eminent domain the property in accordance with Chapter 21 of the Texas Property Code. As part of the process, Harris Health will coordinate with the City of Houston, the Hermann Park Conservancy, the Houston Zoo and other stakeholders to ensure that the expansion of Ben Taub Hospital includes all reasonable planning to minimize impact to the remainder of Hermann Park, including exercising its best efforts to preserve and enhance the public's ability to safely and conveniently access the park's amenities.

Until the legal proceedings are complete and ownership is transferred, this land will continue to be used for park purposes by the City of Houston.

What action has been taken by Harris Health's Board of Trustees?

At its September 2025 meeting, the Harris Health Board of Trustees unanimously adopted a resolution containing the determinations and findings required by Chapter 26 of the Texas Parks & Wildlife Code and authorized the purchase at fair market value through eminent domain of three parcels within Hermann Park consisting of approximately 8.9 acres. Formal notification to any holders of a property interest will follow any decision by Harris County Commissioners Court to approve eminent domain. The purchase through eminent domain also will adhere to the provisions of Chapter 21 of the Texas Property Code, Chapter 26 of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Code and in accordance with Section 281.050 of the Texas Health and Safety Code and all other applicable legal requirements.

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What happens next in the process?

The September board action has initiated a multi-step process, which includes Harris County Commissioners Court holding a Chapter 26 public hearing to consider approving eminent domain. If approved, notification of all property interest holders — including all holders of a reversionary interest in these parcels — will commence according to statutory requirements. Harris Health remains committed to continuing discussions and working with relevant stakeholders to keep them informed throughout the process.

What is eminent domain?

In Texas, eminent domain allows certain public entities like Harris Health to acquire property for a public necessity, even if the owner doesn't want to sell, provided the owner is adequately compensated. This process does not require a public election.

Will all holders of a property interest in this land be contacted about this matter?

Any person or entity that has a property interest in the land that is subject to eminent domain, including any holders of reversionary interests, will be notified in accordance with Chapter 21 of the Texas Property Code if both the Harris Health Board of Trustees and the Harris County Commissioners Court approve the acquisition of the land. Review and approval by Harris County Commissioners Court remains pending at the time of this writing.

Why Not Relocate or Build Elsewhere

Why don't you build elsewhere? Does the patient addition have to be connected to the Ben Taub Hospital?

By constructing the expansion facility in a location that can connect to Ben Taub Hospital, patients retain access to all of the hospital's existing services without the need for duplication. If the inpatient addition were built elsewhere, it would have to be constructed as a stand-alone hospital with all the required support systems and services to provide the breadth of hospital care. Essentially, a new hospital would need to be built. Unfortunately, Harris Health does not have the borrowing capacity to build another new hospital, which would cost approximately \$2.5 billion or more to complete.

Additionally, Ben Taub Hospital operates under a single Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) license, covering all the services provided on the hospital campus. By ensuring physical connectivity, the new inpatient addition would qualify as an extension of the hospital license, thus avoiding regulatory complexity and delays.

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Why is it important Ben Taub Hospital remain in the Texas Medical Center (TMC)?

As a major teaching hospital and clinical training ground for Baylor College of Medicine, Ben Taub Hospital is also affiliated with dozens of nursing and allied health colleges in the TMC. The close physical proximity to other academic and TMC patient-care institutions enhances academic collaboration, research integration and clinical training. Rotations, research projects, and cross-institutional programs benefit from this shared location, allowing seamless movement of students, residents and medical faculty.

As the only public healthcare system in the TMC, Ben Taub Hospital is the way that the underserved can continue to benefit from the medical expertise available in the TMC.