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New Service Models and Technology Drive Configuration and Efficiency for Washington County Hospital

Chicago, IL- [Washington County Hospital](#), soon to be opened under the new name of Meritus Regional Medical Center, located in Hagerstown, MD, is on track for opening on December 11, 2010. The new regional medical center is designed by [Matthei & Colin Associates](#) with an eye on efficiency by closely configuring inter-related technologies and patient care services together to provide high-performance patient care.

The 500,000 square-foot facility is nearing completion and replaces the 105 year-old non-profit hospital. It is expected to draw new people with a need for the latest services in cardiac care, total joint care, and women's services. The final construction cost is expected to be \$160 million for the five-story facility on the 30+acre campus.

Programming started in 2002 for the new hospital which is part of the Washington County Health System now. The health system is also changing to a new name at the end of the year and it will be known as Meritus Health. The word *Meritus* comes from the Latin term "meritum," translating to merit or worth. The new hospital admirably fits the new name.

"There will be many reasons to celebrate soon. In a few months, the hospital will have a new facility, new location, and officially use its new name. That's quite an achievement," said William W. Heun, AIA, partner at [Matthei & Colin Associates](#), a healthcare architecture and planning firm, who has been closely working with the hospital since 2002.

The new medical center floor plan incorporates strategic placement of departments to ensure patient privacy, safety, and efficiency. The emergency room is located on the first floor and it is adjacent to the medical laboratory and inpatient behavioral health unit making it easier to provide better care. The Family Birthing Center, special care nursery, the pediatric unit, and the women's medical/surgical unit are near to each other offering greater efficiency and a making it easier to provide a multi-disciplinary clinical approach. It also makes it more convenient for visitors to visit both the mother and infant(s). On the next floor is the new Total Joint Center. This is a perfect example of new health services that meet today's patient needs. The joint center is close to the comprehensive inpatient rehabilitation, and the orthopedic and neurology services.

In total, the new medical center will include 267 single patient rooms, including medical surgical, rehab, critical care, LDRP and behavioral health. The emergency department boasts 53 emergency treatment spaces, comprised of trauma, cardiac, acute, urgent care and behavioral health rooms, as well as dedicated CT and radiology rooms. Other noteworthy facilities are 14 ORs with the latest in support technologies, a wound center with 4 hyperbaric chambers and in hospital infusion center.

The new hospital has high-efficiency and energy-efficient systems that include green building and sustainable design. These were selected on the basis of real returns and affordability. The current technology includes a digitally-operated HVAC system that can be managed on-site or remotely. When special needs arise, the hospital facility staff can fill a specific environmental request on-line. Advanced telecommunications permit physicians, nurses, and teams to communicate effortlessly in diverse areas of the medical center. The final steps for completing the overall project and moving to the new hospital are underway.

“There are many challenges with a project that spans several years like this one. The cost of construction increased significantly over the course of the project, the economy changed, and there was significant growth in new services offered at the hospital. A great deal of advanced planning was involved to meet these changing conditions, control the budget, and meet the hospital’s timeline. The single biggest achievement will be to complete a project of this scope in 33 months from notice to proceed to treating patients. The team worked closely with the hospital to meet their expectations,” said Heun.

In addition to M&CA, the primary team members are Gilbane Building Company, Leach Wallace Associates, and Fredrick Seibert Associates.

Since 1974, Matthei & Colin Associates(M&CA) specializes in planning and design of healthcare environments. M&CA’s architectural services are focused on healthcare and bring an unparalleled depth of experience to every project. Their mission is to deliver imaginative solutions that address both facilities and operational criteria, maximizing staffing, and functional efficiency. Visit their website at www.mca-architecture.com.

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