

Residents help with centre's design

Eastwood health facility continues to spark controversy

TIM LAI
Journal Staff Writer
EDMONTON

East-end residents offered design suggestions for the new Eastwood health centre Monday in spite of lingering opposition to the facility's location.

Nearly 100 people attended a workshop organized by Capital Health Monday evening at the Santa Maria Goretti Hall. Residents were split into groups. Each group was asked to design a floor plan for the centre, using blocks and an aerial map of the area.

The new centre is to be located at the old Cromdale school site at 11240 79th St., six blocks south of an existing smaller facility. Some area residents say the new centre should be built closer to 118th Avenue.

"We're trying to make the best of it so it doesn't look like a typical big box because we're going to have to go by it every day," said Sophia Tymchyshyn, who has lived three blocks away from the future site for more than 25 years.

Concepts developed at the meeting included an L-shaped building, a U-shaped facility and a decentralized model connected by walkways. Some residents wanted underground parking, while others said a parking lot should border Northlands Park.

But most people said they just wanted it to be visually appealing, with green space, and be a good fit for the neighbourhood, they said.

But Marianne Stewart, CEO of the primary care division of Capital Health, acknowledged that could be challenging. "Like many old buildings, it would have



BRUCE EDWARDS, THE JOURNAL

From left to right, Bonnie Budge, Fay Pohlko and Sophia Tymchyshyn work on the design of the new Eastwood Primary Health Centre at the Santa Maria Goretti Community Hall on Monday.

to entirely renovated," Stewart said. "That would be extensive and expensive."

Stewart said she understands the concerns about location, but Capital Health requires a large space for the facility.

"We're looking to attract family physicians, looking to provide urgent care and after-hours services and that requires a larger footprint."

Capital Health bought the land for \$350,000 from the Edmonton public school board.

Coun. Ed Gibbons, who is also frustrated by the site but pleased about potential services, hopes the final design will satisfy all parties.

"Let's do it right, let's not just put up a building and be happy that there's a health centre," Gibbons said.

The new centre, which will serve 60,000 city residents, would be similar to the Northeast health centre, with family medical clinics, children's services, seniors services and mental-health coun-

selling. Specialists will also make regular visits.

The facility will offer urgent medical care, but won't have the same capabilities as a hospital emergency department.

Ideas generated at the workshop will be compiled by the architects at Manasc Issac Architects Ltd.

A model will be at the next meeting, April 4. Capital Health hopes to have a final design concept by June.

tlai@thejournal.canwest.com