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News Release

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Swedish Moves Forward on Mill Creek Ambulatory Care and Emergency Facility – New center could open in 2010

MILL CREEK, WASH., Jan. 15, 2010 – Swedish Health Services continues to make progress on development of an innovative ambulatory care and freestanding emergency room (ER) in Mill Creek. A building permit application is under review by Snohomish County and an exterior rendering of the structure is done. The current schedule anticipates construction to begin in March and be completed by the end of the year.

Designed to be open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, Swedish will lease 55,000-square-feet of space for clinical programs including an ER with 18 exam rooms, advanced diagnostic imaging (including X-ray, ultrasound, CT scan and MRI), on-site laboratory services, as well as primary and specialty care offices.

The facility is planned on a 4.9-acre parcel on 128th St., just off Interstate 5. Plans call for 86,000 square feet of built space on three floors, with the ER and imaging center occupying the first level. The building project will be managed and owned by Hammes Company, a third-party development partner of Swedish. Hammes Company will invest roughly \$25.5 million in the building and surrounding parking areas.

“The new facility will provide a vital service to a fast-growing area,” said Kevin Brown, Swedish senior vice president and chief administrative officer. “Many South Snohomish and North King County families now have to travel 20 to 30 minutes, often in heavy traffic, for medical care in an emergency.” The new facility will be able to treat patients immediately who are suffering from severe lacerations or burns, broken bones, sports injuries, allergic reactions, food poisoning, work-related injuries and many other medical emergencies. Swedish estimates that the ER alone will see more than 35,000 patient visits each year.

Over the next year, the new development will create nearly 200 new construction and related jobs. In addition, 130 permanent health-care jobs will be created.

“Swedish Health Services has played a meaningful role in delivering quality health care to Snohomish County residents for nearly 20 years. The development of a new, cutting-edge facility in Mill Creek and the expansion of an already significant partnership between Stevens Hospital and Swedish means better health-care choices and new jobs – both important to the residents of Snohomish County,” said Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon.

– More –

Swedish Moves Forward on Mill Creek Ambulatory Care and Emergency Facility, Page 2

Last month, Swedish announced plans to create an integrated affiliation with Stevens Hospital in Edmonds. “The Mill Creek facility will complement that new arrangement very well,” Brown said. “The whole region is experiencing steady growth and trend data indicates the need for emergency and ambulatory care will expand significantly in the next five years.”

John Milne, M.D., medical director for strategic development at Swedish, stated that even patients with complicated diagnoses – such as acute asthma, dehydration, congestive heart failure or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease – often respond rapidly to appropriate therapy.

“We think of a freestanding ER as a place to evaluate patients quickly, stabilize and treat them, then observe them closely,” explained Dr. Milne. “Many will get much better during the initial treatment period and avoid an expensive hospital admission.”

He added, “There is a huge gap between what can be done in a traditional outpatient clinic and an acute-care hospital. Many people don’t require hospitalization and full inpatient treatment, but they need much more than clinic services or home care. A freestanding ER fits perfectly in the middle of that range.”

Patients at Mill Creek will be taken directly to an open room, bypassing the typical triage and registration process that results in queuing and frequently long ER wait times. ‘Direct bedding’ of patients, immediate initiation of treatment and in-room registration will improve care and eliminate wasted effort.

“We’re really just part the rapid evolution of healthcare,” said Dr. Milne. “Many more things can be done on an ambulatory or outpatient basis these days, saving people both time and money.”

Dr. Milne emphasized that the ER directly supports the work of local emergency response teams. By not having to drive so far to deliver patients, paramedics and EMTs will be back into service quicker and better able to cover their territory.

The Mill Creek ER is patterned after a highly successful model Swedish developed in Issaquah. Opened in March 2005, it was the first freestanding ER in the region and was immediately embraced by the community for bringing higher acuity care closer to home. In 2009, The Swedish/Issaquah emergency department was named best ER in the region by Consumers’ CHECKBOOK and also received the prestigious Summit Award by Press Ganey Associates – the healthcare-satisfaction industry’s most coveted mark of achievement, for maintaining patient satisfaction scores in the 95th percentile or above for at least three years.

All physicians at Mill Creek will have access to EPIC, Swedish’s secure electronic health records system, so vital information can be conveyed easily among a patient’s authorized caregivers. The system provides a common platform for clinicians to share medical documentation, test results, prescriptions – and information can be sent to any EPIC facility where a patient is treated.

Swedish has worked diligently to weave the planned ER into the fabric of the surrounding community. Now that design plans are more concrete, Swedish representatives will seek additional input from local residents and from physicians practicing nearby.

Swedish Moves Forward on Mill Creek Ambulatory Care and Emergency Facility, Page 3

“No one knows exactly how health-care reform will alter the current financing and delivery system over the next decade. Regardless of the form, we do expect to see more care delivered locally in lower cost, more flexible facilities such as this one” said Brown. “We’ve designed Mill Creek so Swedish can easily adapt to changing community needs.”

Mahlum Architects and Andersen Construction Co. have been selected to design and construct the building.

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About Swedish

Swedish is the largest, most comprehensive non-profit health provider in the Greater Seattle area. It is comprised of three hospital campuses – First Hill, Cherry Hill and Ballard – a freestanding emergency department and ambulatory care center in Issaquah, Swedish Visiting Nurse Services, and the Swedish Physician Division – a network of more than 40 primary-care and specialty clinics located throughout the Puget Sound area. This fall, Swedish broke ground on a new medical office building and hospital in the Issaquah Highlands, as well as a medical office building and ambulatory center in Ballard. In addition to general medical and surgical care, Swedish is known as a regional referral center, providing specialized treatment in areas such as cardiovascular care, cancer care, neuroscience, orthopedics, high-risk obstetrics, pediatric specialties, organ transplantation and clinical research. For more information, visit www.swedish.org