

Charity Hospital Re-Use: The Only Responsible Option

Re: *"Revitalized Charity will be key to city's recovery," your opinions, September 20.*

After thorough scrutiny of the 2008 RMJM Charity Hospital Feasibility Study, the case for renovating Charity Hospital for use as the new Academic Hospital is overwhelmingly obvious.

I base this statement on 40 years of health care architectural experience in designing major alterations for aging urban teaching hospitals. I am also a member of the National Code Revision Committee of the American Institute of Architects, a multidisciplinary group of health care professionals, architects, engineers, urban planners and government agencies that creates guidelines for all U.S. health care facilities.

The case for the adaptive re-use of Charity Hospital is based on fiscal, suitability and humane reasons. The existing building is a sound structure needing modest repairs to its core and shell, and is more than adequate to create a world class, state-of-the-art, health care facility. Because it stands empty, the interior can be demolished and rebuilt, saving several years of construction time. When you take into account property acquisition and relocation there is even more time saved. The costs for the land, core and shell of a new hospital building are typically estimated as 10 – 15% of the total construction cost. Why add such burdensome costs when Charity can be renovated instead and provide a facility capable of attracting world class talent?

The humane rationale is also blatantly obvious. Acquiring land for a new building requires the relocation of neighborhoods and businesses. The human trauma and financial burden of such relocation in Katrina's aftermath, as well as the many failed urban renewal projects across America over the past 60 years, present stunning evidence of the fallacy of such policies.

It is inconceivable that the State can ignore the responsible fiscal solution for University Hospital: renovating Charity Hospital.

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