

PERKINS + WILL

November 16, 2009

Ms. Sandra Stokes
The Foundation for Historical Louisiana
502 North Boulevard
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Re: Feasibility of restoring and renovating Charity Hospital in New Orleans, LA

Dear Sandra,

We have been following the debate regarding the restoration of Charity Hospital and its pivotal role in providing high quality healthcare to the residents of New Orleans. We are particularly interested in the concept of restoring and renovating Charity Hospital, due to our interest in community healthcare resources and sustainable hospitals. For your information and, as a brief introduction, Perkins+Will is a 1600 person architecture and interiors practice with a focus on the design of healthcare facilities and sustainable architecture. Our credentials in this particular field of expertise are substantial, as we have worked for many of the nation's leading healthcare institutions, going back to 1935.

Let us introduce ourselves as individuals as well: Chris Bormann is a licensed architect with 22 years of experience, is a Principal of Perkins+Will, and is Healthcare Market Sector Leader for the firm's New York office. Robin Guenther is a licensed architect with 31 years of experience, is a Principal of Perkins +Will, and is a national leader in the field of Sustainable Healthcare.

We learned about the Charity Hospital Feasibility Study by RMJM- Hillier. Steve McDaniel was the Principal-in-Charge of the RMJM-Hillier team that prepared the Study. After the Study was completed, Mr. McDaniel joined Perkins+Will, and he has provided us with a thorough description of the details of the Executive Summary dated August 20, 2008 and the full Report dated September 15, 2008.

Having reviewed the complete Feasibility Study, Perkins+Will endorses the Report's recommendation for the restoration and renovation of this important healthcare facility, over its replacement, in order to provide critical healthcare services to New Orleans.

Building Envelope

Based on our review of the Study and its technical appendices, we agree that the exterior walls, windows, and roof can be effectively restored. It appears from the materials in the Study that Charity Hospital was well built and, when properly maintained, should provide many more years of

service. The exterior limestone has sustained damage over the years, but the recommended repairs can make the exterior wall system an equal or better wall assembly than would be designed, according to today's standards, for a new hospital building.

Recommendation to Rebuild within Existing Shell

We agree with the recommended approach, to gut the entire interior of the building, including complete removal of all interior partitions and ceilings, as well as all mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems. This minimizes the impact of unknown conditions within existing construction, and allows budgeting and cost control to be very predictable. Only the historic lobby would remain, to be restored.

One of the fundamental reasons why this particular renovation makes sense is that the building is vacant, which means the interior can be gutted down to the structure and rebuilt from scratch, as if it were the fit-out of a new building. This approach is much less expensive than working in an occupied building, where phased renovation might necessitate reliance on swing space and temporary moves of clinical departments.

In terms of Sustainable Design, re-using the existing structure and repairing the exterior walls saves considerable resources and conserves energy that that would otherwise be required to build from scratch.

Cost of Construction

The Study contains an estimate comparing the cost of renovating Charity with the cost of building a brand new ground-up hospital. Based on our experience, we agree that the gut and renovation of Charity, as proposed in the Study, will be significantly less expensive than new construction. Taking advantage of tax credits available for historic buildings will further increase the savings in the renovation option, over the new construction option.

Floor Plates

The general configuration of the building floorplates and massing, as indicated in the Feasibility Study's diagrams, is workable for a new modern hospital. This traditional hospital building format, with wide floor plates on the lower levels forming a diagnostic platform and patient care units above, is a tested and workable arrangement. The building wings planned to house new inpatient units are similar to those in other urban hospitals that have been effectively renovated. These hospitals provide excellent state-of-the-art acute care and critical care patient settings and we believe Charity can do the same and be just as successful.

Interestingly enough, preliminary findings from Evidence Based Design suggest that increased access to daylight and views have positive impacts on patients and staff alike. Charity Hospital's narrow wings incorporate much of what we advocate regarding floorplate dimensions, because they provide excellent access to daylight and views.

Interior Architecture

The front door and entrance sequence to today's modern hospital are both symbolic and highly functional in terms of initiating the overall patient experience and introducing effective way-finding. Various functions need to be co-located at, or near, the hospital's front door, including reception, security, public facilities, retail, volunteer areas, and patient waiting, as well as miscellaneous storage and amenities.

The Study proposes enclosing and covering the existing fore-court immediately outside the hospital on Tulane Avenue, to create a new atrium. This offers an excellent opportunity to accommodate these entry functions in a new lobby space. This new interior atrium also provides a new, updated face to Charity Hospital, while respecting the existing historic architecture.

Conclusion

We agree that the recommendations in the Feasibility Study are valid, logical, and consistent with best practices for planning new, modern hospitals.

In summary, Perkins+Will supports the concept that Charity Hospital can be effectively restored and renovated to become a modern, state-of-the-art, acute care hospital. While we did not duplicate the effort of the original study, we believe that re-using the existing Charity Hospital, instead of building an entirely new replacement hospital, is a viable and cost effective approach.

This solution would achieve the following:

- Save time in construction, to provide healthcare to the community sooner.
- Save money, to reduce the burden on financing sources.
- Protect an existing historic neighborhood from demolition.
- Preserve an important symbol and architectural landmark in the community.

We find ourselves in a time when Sustainable Design has, of necessity, become a very important concept, and many government agencies require conformance with its principles. In addition, we continue to lose historic buildings in our communities. In this particular moment, we see the re-use of Charity Hospital as an excellent opportunity for the State of Louisiana to take a leadership position on Sustainable Design, preservation, and community integration.

We hope that our review and endorsement of the Charity Hospital Feasibility Study are of value to you in your campaign to save Charity Hospital.

Sincerely,



Chris Bormann, AIA, LEED AP
Healthcare Principal
Perkins+Will



Robin Guenther, AIA, LEED AP
Healthcare Principal
Perkins+Will