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\$611 million hospital planned

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Conceptual rendering provided by SRG Partnership [\[enlarge\]](#)
Predesign for the planned new forensic hospital was done by SRG Partnership in association with architecture +.

The Department of Social and Health Services hopes to start construction in summer 2023 on a \$611 million project in Lakewood on the campus of Western State Hospital, Washington's largest psychiatric hospital.

The department is requesting qualifications for architectural design, engineering and construction administration for a 560,000-square-foot, 350-bed forensic hospital on the campus at 9601 Steilacoom Blvd. S.W. Submittals are due by June 30, according to a notice at <https://tinyurl.com/forensichospital> in the June 9 DJC.

The expected maximum allowable construction cost is \$400 million. The planned delivery method is general contractor/construction manager.

The state Legislature has appropriated funding available starting July 1 for the design of the hospital and demolition of up to six existing buildings, but a future appropriation is needed for construction, said Robert Hubenthal, director of capital programs at DSHS.

Construction should be complete in spring 2027, if it starts in summer 2023, he said.

Western State Hospital serves two types of adult patients, he said. “Civil” patients have been ordered hospitalized because the courts deem them a harm to themselves or others. “Forensic” patients are at the hospital to determine if they are competent to stand trial in the criminal court system. They stay there until they are deemed competent.

In 2018, the Associated Press wrote that the state-owned 800-plus bed hospital has been plagued by problems for years that ranged from assaults on health care workers to escapes by dangerous patients. Inspections found health and safety violations, a lack of trained or qualified staff, fear of retaliation from managers and too much focus on bureaucracy over staff safety, the story noted.

That year Gov. Jay Inslee announced a five-year plan for the state's mental health system. Parts of the plan include keeping forensic and some civil commitment patients at Western State Hospital, while moving other patients to community settings, the AP reported.

Hubenthal said the new forensic hospital is part of Inslee's plan. It will allow the DSHS to downsize the number of civil patients at the Western State campus in favor of community-based treatment and increase the number of forensic beds.

The hospital project will likely consist of a residential and treatment building, an administrative annex and a building for support services like maintenance, he said.

Hubenthal said it will offer contemporary facilities based on modern treatment programming, and DSHS will seek full accreditation for it.

“(It) will help address issues of security, supervision and of accessible programming and treatment,” he said.

SRG Partnership in association with architecture + did predesign for the planned new forensic hospital.

An informational video call meeting for the RFQ for the hospital will be held at 10:30 a.m. June 18. Hubenthal said the DSHS expects to select the architectural consultant by the end of July.

The Western State campus has more than 60 buildings, many constructed in the 1930s. DSHS provides services there and at these state-owned hospitals: Eastern State Hospital and the Child Study and Treatment Center.

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