

# ElCerritoPatch

## New West County Health Center Will Open by End of September

The new \$45 million San Pablo facility, paid for in part by federal stimulus funds, will replace a 45-year-old clinic in Richmond.



*-By Bay City News Service | September 6, 2012*

Local political leaders and health officials celebrated a multi-million dollar upgrade to an ailing West Contra Costa County health center in San Pablo Tuesday just weeks before the facility will open its doors.

The \$45 million West County Health Center will replace the Richmond Health Center, which opened in 1967 at 100 38th St. in Richmond and has not been able to keep up with the area's growing health demands, Contra Costa Health Services officials said.

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Tours of the new 53,000-square-foot facility located at 13601 San Pablo Ave. were given Tuesday afternoon, followed by music, refreshments and speeches from local politicians and health officials who pushed the project along.

Speakers included U.S. Rep. George Miller, Contra Costa County Supervisor John Gioia, San Pablo Mayor Cecilia Valdez, Contra Costa Regional Medical Center and Health Centers CEO Anna Roth, and Contra Costa Health Services Director Dr. William Walker.

Construction began in April 2011 after about a decade of securing funding, which ultimately came from \$12 million in federal stimulus through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and the remainder from county sources, Contra Costa Health Services spokeswoman Kate Fowlie said.

Supervisor Gioia, who was involved in finding a location for the public health center and finding the money to build it, said the new two-story facility will be able to see more patients with 58 exam rooms, which has space to serve more than the current 7,000 monthly patients at the Richmond center.

"While it is a building, it is symbolic of making quality health care more accessible to the community," the supervisor said.

He credited the support of the city of San Pablo for making the construction project move quickly -- the building went up in about 16 months -- and connecting the county health center to services from nearby DoctorsMedical Center.

A \$1 million contribution from John Muir Health will provide extended evening and weekend care starting in 2013, Fowlie said.

The facility will continue to offer a slough of services all at one location including specialty care, well-baby visits, immunizations, and cardiology.

The West County Health Center is part of eight health centers operated by Contra Costa Health Services and expected to be the

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first LEED-Silver certified, a distinction that it was designed as an environmentally friendly building.

As for the Richmond building that will soon be empty, Gioia said the county would like to work with the city of Richmond to convert the building into what the city sees fit for the area near a Target shopping center. The supervisor mentioned ideas of a retail space or supermarket coming in.

The supervisor said studies from more than 10 years ago showed that costs to maintain and repair the aging building would cost the county more than constructing a new facility — however finding that space proved challenging.

"Finding a new health center site is harder than you think," Gioiasaid.

The health center will open by the end September. For more information about the health center, visit [www.cchealth.org/topics/west\\_county\\_center/](http://www.cchealth.org/topics/west_county_center/)

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