

# Area's first official green building can't come soon enough for Hunter Health

BY ADAM KNAPP

Hunter Health Clinic is hoping to make Wichita's first LEED certified building one to remember. From a bird's-eye view, it will be shaped like an eagle, with several environmentally friendly aspects incorporated to honor Native American culture.

"Ours is the first building that's been (LEED) registered," says Hunter CEO Susette Schwartz. "We're hoping it's the first building built."

The clinic, an Urban Indian Health Program federally funded Community Health Center, operates in a 17,000-square-foot facility at the corner of Central and Grove that is more than 80 years old.

Its new facility will be about 38,000 square feet, not including the basement, directly behind the existing facility. Ground is expected to be broken on the project in April.

Employees are scheduled to move into Hunter's new facility in May 2009. The old building will be torn down and used for a parking lot, and will not obstruct the view of the new building.

"I think people driving by are going to be surprised when it's torn down, and all of a sudden there's a brand new place standing there," Schwartz says with a laugh.

Mei Cheng, a pediatrician and medical director of the Hunter Health Clinic, says a new facility is long overdue.



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Hunter Health Clinic CEO Susette Schwartz stands in front of the plot of land where a new clinic is expected to be completed by next year.

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"I would say it's almost desperately needed," Cheng says. "We've been trying to maximize our space for the past 15 years. Having more space will allow us to concentrate more on patient care."

Approximately 75 percent of Hunter's patients are uninsured. About 16 percent are covered by Medicaid, 4 percent by Medicare and 5 percent by private insurance. Hunter has gone from 51,431 patient visits in 2004 to 64,105 in 2006.

Hunter is still searching for a LEED certified general contractor, Schwartz says. The designer was Dan Dokken, a LEED-accredited professional with Law/Kingdon Inc.

It was Dokken's idea to make the design resemble a flying eagle, because he says it symbolizes strength.

"Yeah, I'd say it was harder than a normal project," Dokken says. "But it was also more enjoyable. The building is so complex because we're housing all these different types of clinics. There's just a

multitude of different activities that we had to accommodate. And then to tie it into the Native American culture, and then to tie it into the LEED requirements — all those elements have been hard but it's been a rewarding challenge."

The overhang of the building — a covered area for patient drop offs — will represent the eagle's beak.

Rainwater will be channeled through the beak and the wings of the building for reuse. It is also designed to maximize use of sunlight through clearstory windows and reflective tiles on the roof.

"The design will be very energy-efficient to minimize monthly utility bills, allowing (Hunter) to devote more money to patient care," Dokken says.

Besides its central clinic, Hunter has four other Wichita locations for a diabetes care center, child guidance center, satellite center and Inter-Faith Ministries. The central clinic recently extended its hours to midnight.