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Local News

Bethany Hospital to Shift to Extended Care

Jennifer O'Neil reporting

CHICAGO (WBBM Newsradio 780) – Advocate Health Care says it is not deserting the west side by turning Bethany Hospital into a facility for patients with long-term needs.

Spokesman Tony Mitchell says it's committed to the area and will continue to serve the community.

It plans to become the community's first and only long term acute care hospital, meaning it will serve patients with extended care needs due to serious medical conditions.

Mitchell cites a lack of utilization, duplication of services and mounting financial losses for the move.

Advocate plans to change the emergency room from comprehensive to immediate first aid and care for minor illness and injuries.

It also plans to close its obstetric and psychiatric units and its substance abuse program.

But many in the community are not happy with the move.

Dozens of church and community leaders gathered outside city hall chambers Tuesday afternoon to call on the city council to investigate the move and its effect on healthcare, taxpayers and neighboring hospitals.

Cook County Commissioner Roberto Maldonado vows for public hearings at the county level.

He says it's insulting for Bethany to suggest that the west side needs a nursing home and not a hospital.

Those who use the hospital and others held signs saying "Save Bethany Hospital" and "Advocate: Stop racial redlining"

Religious leaders like the Reverend Marshall Hatch with New Mount Pilgrim Baptist Church and Rainbow/Push say they want an extensive impact study done before Bethany closes and services are reduced.

They want to know what the human impact will be, how taxpayers will be affected, and how other hospitals like Stroger will fare.

The City Council's Committee on Health held a hearing Tuesday afternoon on the subject.