

FAQ: Potential Ben Taub Hospital Expansion



Updated: 9-15-25

Statement: Harris Health is a critical provider of healthcare and emergency services in Harris County and surrounding counties. To ensure that these services are available to meet the needs of the population of the greater southeast Texas region, it is necessary for Harris Health to expand Ben Taub Hospital so that it can provide the increased capacity necessary to serve the essential emergency services and healthcare needs of the residents of the City of Houston, Harris County, and surrounding counties.

In 2023, Harris County voters overwhelmingly approved Harris Health's \$2.5 billion bond package to fund its multi-year strategic facilities plan, which authorized the expansion of inpatient capacity at Ben Taub Hospital by approximately 110 additional private patient rooms through the construction of a tower adjacent to Ben Taub Hospital.

Why does Harris Health need to expand the inpatient bed capacity at Ben Taub Hospital?

Today, Ben Taub Hospital is consistently operating at its maximum inpatient capacity (402 beds). Based on an extensive analysis relating to needs assessment and increased population, Harris Health expects Ben Taub Hospital to see a demand for an additional 18,000 emergency visits over the next ten years that will require additional inpatient bed capacity.

Why can't the expansion occur within the campus of Ben Taub Hospital?

Unfortunately, it is not viable to expand the existing Ben Taub Hospital campus within the existing site. Any additional construction on the site would be impractical and interrupt the organization's ability to serve the community's needs within the busy Level I trauma hospital and its outpatient specialty facilities.

Where is the land that Harris Health may acquire as part of the Ben Taub hospital expansion?

Harris Health has identified 8.9 acres of Hermann Park property for the potential expansion of the Ben Taub Hospital facilities. This property is located directly across from the Ben Taub Hospital emergency and trauma center off Lamar Fleming Drive and is owned by the City of Houston. Although this property is part of Hermann Park, it represents less than 2% of the park's 445 acres and is separated from the park's main features and attractions by Cambridge Street.

Why is Harris Health considering the acquisition of park land and not opting to acquire other property?

The proximity of this property to Ben Taub Hospital makes it uniquely suitable for construction of the patient tower to be directly connected to Ben Taub Hospital via sky bridge. Having the new patient tower nearby gives all patients access to the entirety of specialties and expertise available at a Level I trauma hospital and makes staffing the new structure easier and more efficient.

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What would be the process for acquiring the park land?

On July 24, 2025, the Harris Health Board of Trustees held a public hearing on the proposed taking of these 8.9 acres of property for the potential expansion of Ben Taub Hospital. Prior to the public hearing, Harris Health provided notice to the City of Houston and to the public (in the form of three weekly public notices published in the Houston Chronicle) in accordance with the state law requirements applicable to projects that involve the use or taking of park land. Following the public hearing, the Harris Health Board of Trustees approved a motion authorizing Harris Health to notify the City of Houston and other stakeholders of Harris Health's intent to acquire the property and to pursue additional dialogue with the City of Houston and Harris County for the next 60 days. The Harris Health Board of Trustees has not approved any eminent domain action related to this property.

If approved by the Harris Health Board of Trustees and the Harris County Commissioners Court, Harris Health would acquire the property through eminent domain in accordance with Chapter 21 of the Texas Property Code. As part of the process, Harris Health will coordinate with the City of Houston, the Hermann Park Conservancy, the Houston Zoo and other stakeholders to ensure that the expansion of Ben Taub Hospital includes all reasonable planning to minimize impact to the remainder of Hermann Park, including exercising its best efforts to preserve and maintain the public's ability to safely and conveniently access the remainder of Hermann Park.

Until the legal proceedings are complete and ownership is transferred, this land will continue to be used for park purposes by the City of Houston.

What is eminent domain?

In Texas, eminent domain allows certain public entities like Harris Health to acquire property for a public necessity, even if the owner doesn't want to sell, provided the owner is adequately compensated.

Will all holders of a property interest in these tracts be contacted about this matter?

Any person or entity that has a property interest in the tracts subject to eminent domain, including any holders of reversionary interests, will be notified in accordance with Chapter 21 of the Texas Property Code if the Harris Health Board of Trustees and the Harris County Commissioners Court approve the acquisition of these tracts. At its September meeting of Harris Health Board of Trustees, the Board will be asked to consider adoption of a resolution containing the determinations and findings required by Chapter 26 of the Texas Parks & Wildlife Code and authorizing the acquisition of the previously referenced parcels of Hermann Park. Formal notification to any holders of a property interest would follow any decision by the Harris Health Board of Trustees and the Harris County Commissioners Court to utilize eminent domain.

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Why don't you move Ben Taub Hospital to another area of town?

Harris Health is a taxpayer-supported public health system and decisions about the location of our facilities have been made based on a multitude of factors – population growth, community need, local resources and feedback from local elected officials and community stakeholders. There has been strong and consistent support from elected officials to keep Ben Taub Hospital in the Texas Medical Center (TMC), where it can remain accessible to other academic and research partners.

As a major teaching hospital and clinical training ground for Baylor College of Medicine, Ben Taub is also affiliated with dozens of Nursing and Allied Health colleges. The physical proximity to other academic and TMC patient-care institutions enhances academic collaboration, research integration and clinical training. Rotations, research projects, and cross-institutional programs benefit from this shared location, allowing seamless movement of students, residents and medical faculty.

Harris Health's 2023 bond referendum allows for approximately \$400 million to be used to expand and make other improvements to the Ben Taub Hospital campus in its current location. The cost to replace the entire hospital and relocate it to another area of town far exceeds the organization's fiscal capacity to borrow and finance a move.

Why does the new inpatient tower have to be connected to the Ben Taub Hospital?

By constructing the tower in a location that can connect to Ben Taub, it takes full advantage of existing services in support of its operation without the need for duplication. If the inpatient tower were to be built elsewhere, it would have to be constructed as a stand-alone facility with all the required support systems and services to provide the breadth of hospital care, which would increase its cost beyond what Harris Health has the resources to provide.

Additionally, Ben Taub Hospital operates under a single Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) license, covering all the services provided on the hospital campus. By ensuring physical connectivity, the new inpatient tower would qualify as an extension of the hospital license, thus avoiding regulatory complexity and delays.