

Barton Community Clinic's \$1.5 mil. remodel under way

By Kathryn Reed

While the medical care is the same as any Barton facility, the environment has the feeling of being second class.

Walking into the Barton Community Clinic it seems a bit dingy – not dirty – just old and tired. Next summer that statement won't be able to be made.

Orange construction fencing is in place, the entrance is on the reverse side, trees are down, sod is gone, parking will be a bit chaotic. On June 4 dignitaries from Barton Health had a groundbreaking ceremony for the facility even though the preliminary work had begun in May. In a year the facility will practically be new.



Sharon Bishop is overseeing the renovation of the Barton Community Clinic.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

When the renovation is finished, 3,000 square feet will have been added to the existing 4,400-square-foot building that sits across from Barton Memorial Hospital on the corner of

South and Third streets. Here is a before and after rendering of the facility.

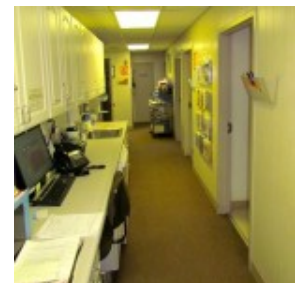
“The facility is old and not well designed,” Brooks Martin, who runs the clinic, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

He is looking forward to the space being used in a more efficient manner.

Offices with doors instead of curtains being drawn will give the medical professionals privacy as they do dictation and paperwork.

The nurses’ station will no longer be in the middle of the hall.

Four exam rooms will be added to the existing 12. Gone from one room will be the IT equipment that hums in a corner and can make for an incredibly hot and uncomfortable setting for patient and practitioner.



Nurses must work in the hallway of the clinic.

Photo/Rebecca Wass

An expanded waiting room means in the cold of winter people on crutches won’t be waiting outdoors on a busy day.

As the economy remains stagnant in South Lake Tahoe, where the unemployment rate is at 15 percent, more people are going to

the community clinic. On average, about 1,500 patients are treated each month, peaking at about 1,700.

Sharon Bishop, clinic manager, doesn't envision patient counts to go down even when the local economy rebounds. This is because health insurance is not likely to return to what it was – with 90 percent coverage and low deductibles.

More than 60 percent of the clinic's patients are women and children. Nearly 60 percent of all patients use English as their primary language.

Patients are often undocumented migrant workers not eligible for Medi-Cal or are insured low-income patients with very high deductibles, according to Barton officials. Patients are charged on a sliding scale. The clinic is operating at a loss of more than \$800,000 a year.



The waiting room will be part of the \$1.5 million overhaul. Photo/Rebecca Wass

“The cost of the expansion and renovation of Barton's Community Clinic's architectural design, interior design, permitting fees, construction, special inspection, equipment, furnishings, way-finding, moving and relocation of departments during phasing, the cost of the clinic will cost nearly \$1.5

million,” Rich Belli, Barton’s director of facilities administration, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Barton Memorial Hospital’s Auxiliary came up with the bulk of the money for improvements – mostly through operating The Attic thrift shop. Other funding sources are the Barton Foundation – in large part through the Festival of Trees and Lights, and Barton Health.

It was in 1989 that doctors Paul Rork, Greg Bergner and Martin started the clinic. Barton took over in 1995. Martin is the only one still directly involved with the clinic.

During construction Bishop said there should be no interruption in care – just some changes to parking. The entrance is already on the reverse side from where it had been.