

Grady

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black, and the institution is considered a vital part of Atlanta's black community.

But the proposed switch to a nonprofit governing board is problematic, too. Some fear that the hospital would be less committed to the poor, and that the board would go from mostly black to mostly white.

State Sen. Vincent Fort, a black Democrat from Atlanta, said Grady is "absolutely critical" to the city's black poor. And he charged that Atlanta's "white power structure" — including the business leaders and politicians who are pushing for the nonprofit board — is trying to orchestrate a takeover.

"To the extent that you have African American doctors, nurses and other professionals operating a big-city hospital and taking care of black people, that is a source of pride in the black community," Fort said. "So there is a great deal of skepticism that the Chamber of Commerce is interested in Grady. There are some of us who believe that is a self-interest."

With 953 beds and 5,000 employees, Grady is an anchor of Atlanta's downtown, and accepts all patients, without regard to their ability to pay.

Only 7 percent of Grady's patients have private insurance, and 75 percent are on Medicaid. Because they lack insurance and have no family doctor, many go to Grady's emergency room even when they don't have an emergency. The ER ends up treating sore throats and other ordinary aches and pains.

Besides Atlanta's poor, Grady's patients include tourists passing through on their way south to Walt Disney World and victims of auto accidents, since Grady is the only hospital in a 100-mile radius of Atlanta that has a Level 1 trauma center, capable of treating the most serious injuries. (A popular bumper sticker seen on cars along Atlanta-area highways reads:

"If I'm in a car crash, take me to Grady.")

Grady played a critical role after the bombing at the 1996 Olympics blocks away. And in March, when a bus carrying a college baseball team from Ohio plunged off an overpass, 19 students and coaches were rushed to Grady. Grady also has the state's only poison control center, obstetrics intensive care unit and comprehensive sickle cell center. And the city's emergency command center for handling plane crashes and terrorist attacks is based at Grady.

If Grady were to close, poor people would probably swamp other hospitals' ERs with everything from ordinary colds to genuine medical emergencies.

"It will be a sad day for Atlanta if Grady closes. If people realized the benefits Grady provides, closure would not be on the table," said Dr. Marsha Regenstein, a health policy professor at

George Washington University in the nation's capital.

Doctors, activists, lawmakers, business leaders and the hospital leadership are scrambling to find a fix for Grady, which gets most of its funding from Medicare, Medicaid and Fulton and DeKalb Counties and is run by a governing board whose members are appointed by the two counties' politicians.

In July, a 17-member task force of business leaders recommended the shift to a nonprofit board. Some of Atlanta's major corporations have said they would contribute to Grady if it were run by a nonprofit board because it would manage the hospital more efficiently.

Other public hospitals that have been in distress in recent years include D.C. General Hospital in Washington, which in 2001 stopped taking inpatients, and Martin Luther King Jr.-Charles Drew Hospital, which was built in Los Angeles after the 1965 Watts riots. The hospital lost its government accreditation last summer because of shoddy care and closed its trauma center.



Fort

HUD grant to allow school to continue to revamp area

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Winston-Salem State University has received a three-year \$600,000 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grant to expand its role in building affordable housing and generating community revitalization in the nearby neighborhood.

HUD's Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) program grant will be used to further expand WSSU's role and effectiveness in addressing community needs and revitalizing neighborhoods along the Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive Corridor. Revitalization efforts will be implemented through activities initiated by the Simon Green Atkins Community Development Corporation (SGACDC), an outreach of WSSU established in 1998.

Under the direction of Dr. Pedro Martinez, WSSU Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, the university will focus on developing a master plan to drive investment in the area that will foster mixed-income neighborhoods. WSSU also plans to develop pedestrian-friendly nearby neighborhoods which will contain a viable mix of businesses that will provide jobs, products, and services that residents currently have to leave their neighborhoods to access.

"Improving the quality of life in neighborhoods around the campus will reflect favorably on the university and this community as WSSU continues to take the lead in an area where very little private investment has occurred in recent years," says Martinez.

The grant further calls for WSSU's SGACDC to build six affordable homes for first-



Martinez

time homebuyers and work with resident associations to make improvements in their neighborhoods, according to Carol Trent Davis, SGACDC executive director. In addition, Davis said a previous

HUD grant in 2005 helped the SGACDC initiate a micro enterprise loan partnership program, which consists of a pool of funds to support low interest loans for local entrepreneurs. Some of those funds are still available to help spark new small businesses in the neighborhood.

Since its establishment, SGACDC has assisted 18 families with becoming first-time homeowners. From that number, 13 families received new homes. Approximately \$2.5 million has been invested with the purpose of developing affordable housing and economic development in the neighborhoods surrounding WSSU. The funds were also directed at providing outreach to benefit low and moderate income families in the area.

Awards

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country.

Mobley's Beep Ball story also won First Place for Feature Reporting in a regional contest. The Society of Professional Journalists Green Eyeshade Awards is a competition open to stations in eleven states in the Southeast. Mobley's Beep Ball piece also won two First Place North Carolina Associated Press Broadcast Awards, one for Feature Reporting and another for Best Use of Sound.

WFDD's general manager, Denise Franklin expressed her support and enthusiasm for the hard work of WFDD's award winning reporters.

"This has been a good year for WFDD's news department. The need for excellent local reporting continues to be a core part of public radio sta-




Franklin


tions like WFDD. We are dedicated to reporting on the communities we serve and I am thrilled that our staff continues to deliver such high quality reporting year-to-year," said Franklin.

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