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## [Original Martin Luther King, Jr. Hospital Building To Be Transformed into LA County's First Behavioral Health Center](#)

**GROUNDBREAKING SCHEDULED OCTOBER 23**



Twelve years after its closure, the original Martin Luther King, Jr. Hospital building will be repurposed into the state-of-the-art Martin Luther King, Jr. Behavioral Health Center with a groundbreaking scheduled on October 23.

The Board of Supervisors on Tuesday unanimously approved entering into a contract with Bernard Bros. Inc. to design and build the 500,000 sq. ft. MLK Behavioral Health Center, envisioned to provide fully-integrated inpatient, outpatient and supportive services for some of Los Angeles County's most vulnerable populations, including those struggling with mental illness, substance use disorders and homelessness, and those who have been in the criminal justice system.

"I can think of no better way to breathe new life into the building that previously housed the original Martin Luther King, Jr. Hospital than to transform it into a one-stop-shop for helping our community members with a variety of mental and physical health needs," said Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, who spearheaded the project.

The MLK Behavioral Health Center will be the latest addition to the 42-acre MLK Medical Campus in Willowbrook, which already houses the [MLK Community Hospital](#), [Outpatient Center](#), [Recuperative Care Center](#), [Mental Health Urgent Care Clinic](#), and [Center for Public Health](#), which includes the [Community Healing and Trauma Prevention Center](#). The [Child and Family Well-Being Center](#) and the [Medical Office Building](#) are under construction and will open next year.

Over the last decade, well over \$1 billion has been invested in Willowbrook, dramatically improving the community's amenities. In addition to the still-expanding MLK Medical Campus, Willowbrook has also seen improvements in its public transportation system, streets, parks and libraries, as well as a significant expansion in its pool of affordable apartments.

"Over the last decade, we have transformed the MLK Medical Campus into a center of excellence that provides holistic care for our community," Supervisor Ridley-Thomas said. "With the MLK Behavioral Health Center, we are intent on establishing a cutting-edge continuum of care that promotes mental health, recovery, trauma prevention, rehabilitation, and many other essential wrap-around services that foster long-term wellness for our patients and the community at large."

The \$335-million MLK Behavioral Health Center will house clinical and behavioral staff from the Departments of Mental Health, Public Health and Health Services. The Probation Department, Office of Diversion and Reentry (ODR), and Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services (WDACS) will sponsor rehabilitative, vocational and training opportunities intended to give people the

skills they need to reintegrate into society. This is the first time all of these County services will be available under one roof.

“We are revitalizing the former King/Drew Hospital as a collaborative resource for behavioral health that will set a new standard for how a public system can deliver on its promise to provide restorative care and at the same time invest heavily in community reintegration,” LA County Mental Health Director Dr. Jonathan Sherin said. “With an arc of services across all levels of treatment intensity alongside an array of opportunities that support recovery, LA County is stepping up to address the needs of its most vulnerable populations. The MLK Behavioral Health Center will not only bring hope and healing to individuals, but to a community and a region that has been underserved for far too long.”

“With the opening of the MLK Behavioral Health Center, we will continue to work together to transform how services are delivered to LA County residents,” added LA County Health Services Director Dr. Christina Ghaly. “Having the ability to screen and assess depression to motivate healthier behaviors and provide comprehensive care for those with serious mental illness is an essential component of high-quality, financially sustainable healthcare and the future of population-based healthcare.”

LA County Public Health Director Dr. Barbara Ferrer said, “We are uniquely positioned to offer hope for our residents struggling with behavioral health concerns through an integrated approach that places patients at the center.”

LA County Probation Chief Terri McDonald added, “The ability of Probation staff to connect our clients to critical onsite reentry services, such as behavioral health counseling and job training, improves client outcomes and community safety.”

"The Behavioral Health Center will enable us to strengthen critical services for older and dependent adults," said WDACS Acting Director Otto Solorzano. "We are thrilled to be part of this visionary effort to establish comprehensive behavioral health services for communities served by the Martin Luther King Jr. Community Hospital." ODR Judge Peter Espinoza (ret.), said, “With the MLK Behavioral Health Center, the people we serve will have an easily accessible location in the community from which to take advantage of the critical mental health, substance use, housing and job readiness services that they need to successfully reenter society after a stint in the criminal justice system.”

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