

# Old KGH sound enough to be detox, treatment center. Comments wanted

[By Annette Cary](#) Updated August 30, 2021 01:26 PM

Drone: Trios Women's and Children's Hospital building

Trios Health, owned by LifePoint Health, operates two hospitals in Kennewick including the Trios Women's and Children's Hospital at 900 S. Auburn St.in downtown Kennewick. By [Bob Brawdy](#)

The former [Kennewick General Hospital building on Auburn Street](#) is structurally sound, according to a new [report commissioned by Benton County](#).

It appears "extremely favorable" that will make the building the choice for a proposed mental health and substance abuse recovery center for the Tri-Cities area, said Lee Kerr, the superintendent of the Kennewick Public Hospital District, at a recent meeting of the board.

It's already being used in the short term as the Trios Women's and Children's Hospital.

## **TOP VIDEOS**

The public can hear more about the proposal for the Two Rivers Behavioral Health Recovery Center and comment at a public meeting of the Benton County Commission 6 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 31, at the Richland Public Library, 955 Northgate Drive.

Attendance can be by phone, internet or in person, with masks required.

The meeting will cover creating an advisory committee for the new center and discussion of the new condition report for the Auburn Street property.

The meeting also will cover the possibility of a sales tax increase for the new center.

The Benton and Franklin County Commissions had suggested a partial reduction of the sales tax collected for Ben Franklin Transit and a corresponding tax increase to pay operating expenses of the proposed new mental health and substance abuse recovery center.

But the transit board earlier this month declined to [put the transit tax cutback on the ballot](#). Voters had previously approved the tax.

However, Benton County does not need a vote of the people to collect a penny of sales tax on every \$10 purchase for the recovery center.

Trios Health, which [owns the hospital buildings on the Auburn Street campus of the original Kennewick General Hospital](#), is using the property until it opens a new \$22 million birthing center next year at its Southridge campus in Kennewick.

## **Treatment center costs**

The Kennewick Public Hospital District has negotiated to buy the old buildings for \$1.6 million, with Benton County now looking at make the purchase.

The Benton County Commission contracted with Wave Design Group to evaluate the Auburn Street building, using some of the \$2.75 million from the Washington state Legislature to kick start a project to open a Tri-Cities substance use treatment center.

The study concluded that \$2.6 million would be needed for basic repairs and upgrades of the Auburn Street buildings, Kerr said. Most of that money would be for its electrical, heating and cooling systems.

It does not include the costs of converting the facility into a mental health and substance abuse recovery center, which would include detoxification services.

County commissioners noted at their Aug. 24 meeting that based on a much smaller, 10-room treatment center for adolescents being built elsewhere costing about \$10.2 million, using the old hospital buildings appeared to be a better financial deal than new construction.

The former Kennewick General Hospital buildings that could be purchased include the original hospital built in 1952 with additional construction since then, and the Spaulding and Battelle buildings constructed in the 1980s. Together they have 193,980 square feet.

Last fall, Benton County agreed to work with the public hospital board on turning the old hospital into a rehab center after an initial feasibility study was favorable.

The cost for the renovation and initial startup was estimated at \$14.9 million, compared to an estimated cost of \$20.6 million to build a new center, according to that study.

The county commission agreed Tuesday that the next step would be moving forward with hiring an architectural firm to redesign of the building.



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## **Treatment center proposal**

The public hospital district, which started [the push for Two Rivers Behavioral Health](#), envisions a center where anyone can walk in 24 hours a day for a substance or mental health needs assessment. It would evaluate urgent behavioral health situations and refer patients to appropriate care.

Inpatient treatment would be offered to anyone needing stabilization for addiction recovery. Medical monitoring of detoxification would be available if abrupt withdrawal could cause life-threatening issues.

The center also could take in people charged with minor crimes who agree to receive treatment rather than jail time.

The center would use licensed professional counselors for therapy and counseling programs, as well as peer counseling from those with experience with addiction or mental illnesses.

The Kennewick Public Hospital Board has discussed the need for a substance abuse recovery center for all of the Tri-Cities area, not just Benton County.

In recent years, Franklin County has moved to a provider and client relationship for some services provided by both Benton and Franklin County, with Benton County operating services and Franklin County paying Benton County to use the service.

"I believe the detox mental health proposal could work effectively under the same or similar model," said Franklin County Commissioner Brad Peck.

To attend the Benton County Commission meeting on the proposed treatment center by phone, dial 509-460-4941. A link to join the meeting with online video is posted at [bit.ly/BentonCountyCommission](http://bit.ly/BentonCountyCommission).

Written comments to be included in the record also can be emailed to the commissioners at [Commissioners@co.benton.wa.us](mailto:Commissioners@co.benton.wa.us) until 3 p.m. the day of the meeting.



A new study found the Trios Women's and Children's Hospital on Auburn Street in Kennewick sound enough to convert into a recovery center, which would help people with substance abuse recovery and provide mental health services. *Tri-City Herald file*

Senior staff writer Annette Cary covers Hanford, energy, the environment, science and health for the Tri-City Herald. She's been a news reporter for more than 30 years in the Pacific Northwest.