

HOSPITALS - DOMINICAN ^{Hosp. 101} Traffic jam at Dominican

Neighbors fear emergency room expansion will crowd streets

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SANTA CRUZ — Dominican Hospital officials are planning a \$4 million emergency room expansion, but nearby homeowners fear the project will increase traffic in an already busy area.

"You see more and more traffic on the street," said John Amundson, who lives on Mission Drive.

"And what I'm really talking about is patient traffic. You don't really see homeowner traffic."

Plans for the emergency room expansion, which are awaiting approval with the county, will create a "state of the art" emergency room, said Roger Hite, chief operating officer and executive vice president of Dominican Hospital.

Hite said that Dominican's buyout of AMI/Community Hospital in March 1990 increased traffic to Dominican by a projected 150 visits

per year.

But he denied the emergency room project would result in more traffic for the narrow streets nearby — just better service.

"I think the key to our project is that it isn't going to increase the traffic flow. What we're doing is making a more private place for our emergency room," Hite said.

The first half of Mission Drive where Amundson lives is filled with doctors' offices for everything from pathology to weight loss.

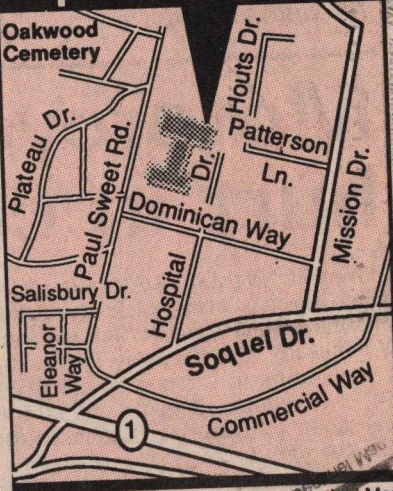
Added to that is hospital traffic that leaves the Dominican parking lot via Dominican Way and turns down Mission Drive out to Soquel Drive.

"The street is deteriorating," said Amundson. "It's not complete with curb and gutter and so there's erosion problems when it rains."

Jack Houts, who has lived at the

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Emergency room expansion



Sentinel Map

Dominican

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top of Mission Drive since 1972, remembers when the street was just chicken farms.

But the current image of Mission Drive is buildings on either side of small, potholed street that is crumbling at the edges.

"The street is in bad shape and has been patched and re-patched. It hasn't been repaved since I've been here," said Houts, who helped build the road with his name nearby.

However, Houts doesn't resent the presence of the neighborhood giant.

"Dominican has been a good neighbor. I know that some don't feel that way because they think (the hospital has) contributed to the traffic flow. But they've been more than fair," said Houts.

But safety is a hot issue for Houts and his neighbors.

Portions of Mission Drive lack sidewalks for the numerous pedestrians walking to and from doctors' offices from a bus stop on Soquel Drive. And Soquel lacks a crosswalk for those pedestrians who cross the multi-lane street.

For drivers, turning onto Soquel from Mission has resulted in numerous accidents.

"Getting onto Soquel Drive is a nightmare," said Houts.

"If you're going north on Mission from Commercial Way, you can't see around the corner. So the driver looks both ways and guns it out there."

"But by the time they get out there, there's a car heading right for them," said Houts.

"They need a set of signals there, but then Thurber Lane is just a block away, and they already have a set of lights."

"Dominican Way is a compounding factor because it's very difficult for people coming out of there to see other people," Amundson said.

"You see broken glass there; you don't see the accidents but you see the glass."

Live Oak Supervisor Jan Beautz said that Dominican Way was originally designed as an emergency exit.

"We are asking (Dominican) to

Dominican's expansion

SANTA CRUZ — If plans are approved, Dominican Hospital will soon be getting an expanded, \$4 million "state-of-the-art" emergency room for its 40,000 patients.

That expansion will create an 11,170 square-foot facility; 6,000 square feet will come from the existing Administration Building, and 5,170 square feet will be built as an upper level addition.

The new facility will feature the following:

- A 2,200-square foot emergency area for ambulatory patients. Patients arriving by ambulance and/or with police will enter through a special ambulance entrance.

- The 15-bed, 6,170-square foot Emergency Department will have private, walled rooms instead of curtains between beds. Ten beds will be equipped with cardiac monitors.

- The trauma room will have full radiology and emergency equipment.

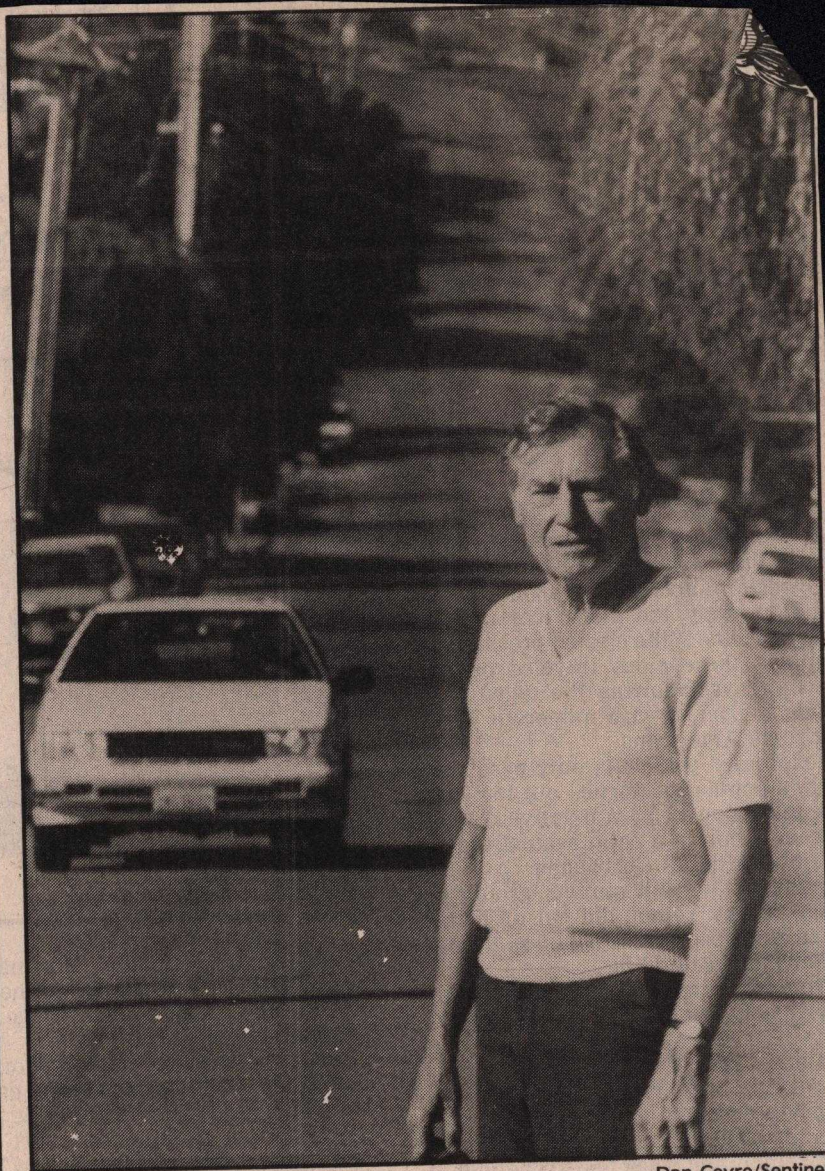
- A 2,800-square-foot Promptcare Department will have eight beds staffed and equipped for non-urgent patients.

Amy Zuckerman

look at the issue of traffic when they do their expansion. People should be going out of the main exit instead of the side street," said Beautz.

Hite said the hospital was required to conduct a traffic and transportation study, which evaluated the affect of traffic in and around Dominican.

One option, said Hite, suggested making Dominican Way one-way so that hospital employees and visitors couldn't enter and exit that way.



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

John Amundson says Mission Drive is overburdened with patient traffic from Dominican Hospital.

"We're prepared to look at any of the options," he said.

He said that evaluation of Dominican's proposal has been stalled at the county level.

"We're eager to get under way. We've been frustrated because we've got all of our state permits and everybody selected to start working."

When Dominican purchased Community Hospital, it was ordered to pay \$57,000 to the county for the resulting increase in traffic,

Hite said. The county charged \$375 for each additional trip, which amounted to 150.

But Hite denied that doctors have moved into the area since the buyout.

"Space has always been tight here," he said. "And there's been no medical space built on this site since the acquisition."

Dick Hansen, vice president of Dominican, said that 125 physicians and medical professionals that are connected to Dominican have offices in the area.