Cleveland Clinic's Board of Directors and hospital leadership concluded that Huron Hospital is not sustainable for a long-term future, according to a statement released by the Clinic.

By JAMES W. WADE III

Staff Reporter

Cleveland Clinic's Board of Directors announced Monday that it will end operations at Huron Hospital within 90 days. After an extensive evaluation of data and ongoing efforts to preserve the hospital, a special committee of Cleveland Clinic's Board of Directors and hospital leadership concluded that Huron Hospital is not sustainable for a long-term future, according to a statement released by the Clinic.

Cleveland Clinic will continue to provide outpatient care at the hospital until the new Cleveland Clinic Huron Community Health Center opens Oct. 3, on the hospital's campus.

According to Cleveland Clinic, the center is better designed to meet the community's changing health needs. The hospital will offer round-trip transportation services from the Huron campus to Cleveland Clinic's main campus, as well as Euclid, South Pointe and Hillcrest hospitals. It says it will also provide ongoing communication to patients, and hold community information meetings on access to care in the future.

As one of Cleveland's first hospitals, Huron Hospital has a 137-year history of serving patients, educating physicians and driving innovation. Over the years, the hospital says that many factors negatively impacted this once-thriving facility, including a steady decline in patient use, a rapidly shrinking population, costly maintenance of the hospital's aging facilities, and substantial fixed costs that were much higher than the hospital could maintain.

“This is a difficult day for Cleveland Clinic, but we are firmly committed to caring for this community and supporting our employees affected by this decision,” said Delos M. Cosgrove, M.D., Chief Executive Officer and President of Cleveland Clinic. “We are facing challenges in healthcare today never seen before, including a dramatic shift toward outpatient care, a difficult economy, a declining population, and the uncertainty of healthcare reform. These challenges require us to adapt to best meet the needs of our patients. Our investment in the new Huron Community Health Center and our work to regionalize trauma will allow us to have more of an impact on the community's health.”

Cleveland Clinic says it intends that the new Cleveland Clinic Huron Community Health Center will continue Huron Hospital's dedication to preventive care and chronic disease management, which is a critical need in East Cleveland and its surrounding area. Due to Huron Hospital's successful chronic disease management practices, 37 percent of all hospitalized patients in 2009 had a first or secondary diagnosis of diabetes, down from a high of 57 percent five years earlier. It is one of 30 hospitals in the nation to receive certification from The Joint Commission as an inpatient diabetes center.

“In accordance with the settlement agreement between the Cleveland Clinic and the Cities of Cleveland and East Cleveland, we have been engaged in what we believed to have been good faith negotiations regarding the ramifications of the closing of a level two trauma center at Huron Hospital
. At no time did the Cleveland Clinic disclose their intent to close the entire hospital. In fact, when asked directly about the future of
Huron Hospital
, Clinic Officials stated that there was no intention to close the emergency room, let alone the entire facility,” said Mayor Frank Jackson in a letter.

In a meeting with Huron Road President Gus Kious, David Bronson President of Cleveland Clinic Regional Hospitals and Dr. Anthony Stallion told over 100 people in a public meeting that was organized by Northeast Ohio's Alliance for Hope (
NOAH), "Unless you know something we don't, Huron Hospital is not closing," said the trio.

"Through better management of chronic disease and less dependence on emergency care and hospital stays, the East Cleveland community now has a greater need for a health center than a hospital. Today, healthcare is delivered largely on an outpatient basis. A community of this size located within three miles of two major hospitals can no longer sustain, nor is there a need for, its own hospital," said Dr. Kious. "I have been humbled by the talented and caring group of individuals who have dedicated their careers to the residents of East Cleveland and the patients of Huron Hospital."

"East Cleveland will be affected greatly ... our firefighters are also EMS workers, so if they take a patient to Hillcrest Hospital or MetroHealth Hospital and a fire starts … they are out of the area which causes another problem for East Cleveland," said Mayor Gary Norton.

"As an East Cleveland resident, a member of the East Cleveland Council, and a practicing health care provider in this community for over 23 years, I am deeply saddened by the closing of Huron Road Cleveland Clinic hospital," said East Cleveland Council President Joy Jordan.

Congresswoman Marcia Fudge held a press conference in front of Huron Hospital to address issues she has with the closing. "I was very disappointed to hear about them closing this hospital," said Fudge.

The Congresswoman still has questions about how they plan to handle the close to 850 employees and it's patients in the area. "I would like to know what their transition plan is going to be and how are they going to handle emergencies, said Fudge.