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## Planned Parenthood will begin doing abortions in Charlotte

 Published: 02 May 2019

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Charlotte is state's abortion capital



CHARLOTTE — Charlotte's Planned Parenthood center is expanding its abortion services and moving to a new location about a mile away from St. Patrick Cathedral.

Planned Parenthood South Atlantic is moving its Charlotte Health Center from Albemarle Road to 700 South Torrence St., located in the historic Cherry neighborhood just east of the cathedral.

The abortion services provider did not return inquiries from the Catholic News Herald for comment, but the Charlotte Observer reported May 2 that Planned Parenthood plans to open in July and expects to begin offering abortions in Charlotte.

The location will be Charlotte's fourth abortion facility. Planned Parenthood's current rented location offers only abortion referrals, but the new facility will offer "the full range of legal services," Pam Pearson, chair of Planned Parenthood South Atlantic's board of directors, told the Charlotte Observer.

The new location, just blocks away from Carolinas Medical Center, is strategically placed in what is North Carolina's abortion capital.

Charlotte's centralized location, easy access and proximity to the South Carolina border make it the busiest city in the state for abortions.

According to the latest data available from the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, more than 36 percent of the total 27,183 abortions performed in North Carolina in 2017 were done in Charlotte.

Mecklenburg County reported 9,912 abortions in 2017 – more than any other county in North Carolina. Fewer than half of those, 3,890 abortions, were performed on county residents.

Charlotte already has three abortion facilities: Family Reproductive Health on Hebron Street, Carolina Women's Clinic

on Wendover Road, and A Preferred Women's Health Center on Latrobe Drive.

A Preferred Women's Health Center is the busiest of Charlotte's three abortion facilities, performing 4,000 to 6,000 medical and surgical abortions each year. It has garnered headlines as the location where the controversial abortionist Ron Virmani works, and it was briefly shut down in 2013 by state regulators over health code violations.

Planned Parenthood said its new location will double the space it has for its reproductive health services and education programs.

"We're very excited about finally having a health center in Charlotte that can meet the needs of the population and also meet the standard of care that Planned Parenthood has become known for," Jill Dinwiddie, chair of the \$10 million fundraising campaign for the Charlotte Health Center, told the Charlotte Observer.

At Planned Parenthood South Atlantic's nine North Carolina locations, six including Charlotte do abortion referrals and three – Asheville, Wilmington and Winston-Salem – perform abortions. Planned Parenthood South Atlantic bills itself as "one of the region's largest Planned Parenthood affiliates," with 14 locations spanning North and South Carolina, Virginia and West Virginia.

Overall, Planned Parenthood performed 332,757 abortions in 2017 – more than half of all abortions in the U.S. that year – according to its annual report.

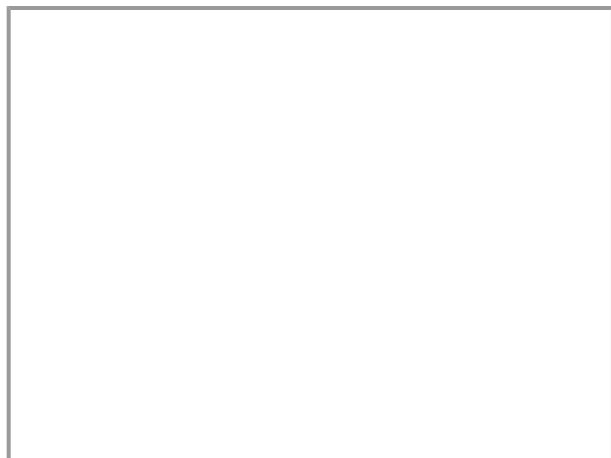
Planned Parenthood's new Charlotte Health Center sits at the edge of the Cherry neighborhood, a historically African-American neighborhood that is undergoing rapid change.

Some neighbors said they knew that a medical office was going into the renovated building, but not everyone knew that it will be operated by Planned Parenthood.

Planned Parenthood has not communicated with neighbors or the Cherry neighborhood association, neighbors said.

Planned Parenthood masked its purchase of the property by setting up a shell corporation, Secure Source LLC, run solely by its chief financial officer, Nancy Martin Long.

Secure Source was incorporated in May 2017, and in July 2017 it bought the 10,626-square-foot building and 0.61-acre site for \$2.35 million, according to state records.



One elderly man who has lived in the Cherry neighborhood for decades said the former property owner told people about the sale to Planned Parenthood in 2017 at a neighborhood meeting, and warned of the likelihood of increased traffic and protest crowds.

"It is what it is," the unidentified man shrugged.

Then he pointed down the street to the now-closed Community Charter School, a prominent building that has been a focal point for the neighborhood since the 1920s, and commented that the building used to house a school for pregnant teens in the 1980s.

A young woman who moved last November into a home right across the street from the location expressed support for Planned Parenthood and said she hoped the new center is successful.

But the resident who lives next door to the Planned Parenthood site said he was "appalled" to hear the news. A pediatric anesthesiologist who is also a Catholic, he said he is sickened by abortion and the throwaway mindset it represents.

"I've helped premature babies at 26 weeks, then at 24 weeks, now at 22 weeks," he said. His respect for life, he said, stems from the fact that he sees exactly what an unborn child looks like – including seeing an unborn baby squirm and cry out in pain when he has to prick them with a needle to anesthetize them during a surgical procedure.

"I'm opposed to abortion. I'm disgusted by it," he said.

Planned Parenthood officials told the Charlotte Observer that the Cherry neighborhood location was chosen because of its accessibility and security, and they are planning for protests.

Joyce Bellamy, acting director of the Charlotte Health Center, said, "That's something that's always been happening. We're not concerned. We're prepared to make sure our patients feel safe."

As part of its extensive renovation of the property over the past several months, a fence and security system have been installed.

In response to the news, Bishop Peter Jugis emphasized Catholic teaching that all human life should be protected starting at conception.

"It is a fact that new human life begins at conception," he said in a May 3 statement. "We must continue to work untiringly for the right to life of every unborn child in the womb to be protected in law and in practice."

— Patricia L. Guilfoyle, editor

**Pictured: Planned Parenthood South Atlantic is renovating this medical office building in the Cherry neighborhood in uptown Charlotte to become its Charlotte Health Center, one of 14 such facilities operated by the regional abortion provider. (Patricia L. Guilfoyle | Catholic News Herald)**

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