



Florida Hospital plans \$25M project in Palm Coast

By Aaron London

Florida Hospital Flagler has agreed to purchase six acres from Flagler County for a \$25-million project that will include a hospital-based emergency department and a medical office building, PALM COAST — Florida Hospital Flagler has agreed to purchase six acres in northern Flagler County for a \$25-million project that will include a hospital-based emergency department and a medical office building, hospital officials announced Tuesday.

The purchase of the county-owned land near Interstate 95 Exit 293 at Matanzas Woods Parkway, near Matanzas High School, for \$175,000 was approved during Monday night's Flagler County Commission meeting as part of the consent agenda. The commission's approval clears the way for the county administrator and county attorney to work out details of the transaction.

The 12-bed freestanding emergency department will care for both adults and children, offering the same services found in emergency rooms attached to a hospital, according to hospital officials, including imaging and laboratory services.

Florida Hospital Flagler officials also intend to construct a two-story medical office building on the site to house a variety of physician practices, including primary care and specialists. The medical office building also will offer another location for patients to access the Palm Coast hospital's outpatient rehabilitation services, the release states.

In a telephone interview Tuesday, Florida Hospital Flagler chief operating officer Wally de Aquino said the decision to build the new facilities reflects the growth Flagler County is experiencing.

"With all the news we've been seeing about new developments in Flagler County, there is a lot of growth," he said. "We are looking into the future and being proactive so we can make sure residents in Palm Coast have easy access to an emergency department."

De Aquino said the addition of a free-standing emergency room in the northern part of the county will also help make things more efficient at the hospital's main campus off of State Road 100.

"We can take some of the pressure from the current emergency department," he said.

Palm Coast Mayor Milissa Holland said the project is a big deal for the city.

"We value our partnership with the hospital," she said Tuesday. "To have such an investment in a very important part of our city just speaks to their commitment to provide access to quality healthcare."

Holland said the project will also be an economic driver for the city and the county.

"We are trying to create jobs and job opportunities and it is critical we support these type of initiatives," she said.



The I-95 interchange at Matanzas Woods Parkway opened in March 2016 and is Flagler County's fourth access point to the interstate. It is the first new interchange in Flagler County since the exit at Palm Coast Parkway was built in the late-1970s.

"We believe in investing in the community. Not only will this project bring new, easier-to-access points of care to Flagler County, but it is also expected to bring jobs and economic growth to the area," Dr. Ron Jimenez, Florida Hospital Flagler CEO, said in the release. "We will use as many local vendors as we can for this construction project. Once completed, we will need to hire additional physicians and staff, and are looking to add proximally 40 full-time employees."

Construction is anticipated to take 10 months and will begin after Florida Hospital Flagler closes on the property and all necessary permits are obtained. De Aquino said there is "a lot of work that needs to be done" in preparing the parcel for construction, including the disposition of some wetlands on the site. The deal with the county also holds out the possibility that more county-owned land could be made available to the hospital if needed.

The architect is Orlando-based HuntonBrady, according to a media release from the hospital. Florida Hospital Flagler in Palm Coast has 99-beds and is one of the six Florida Hospitals in Flagler, Lake and Volusia counties that composes the Florida Hospital Central Florida Division — North Region. In January, the hospital system will be changing its name to AdventHealth and the Flagler County facility will be renamed AdventHealth Palm Coast.