

business

Platte Valley Medical centerpiece

[Print](#)
[Email](#)

For Brighton's economic development, a brand-new hospital may be just what the doctor ordered.

By Aldo Svaldi
Denver Post Staff Writer

Article Last Updated: 06/11/2007 01:06:00 AM MDT

The Southwest region, including Denver, is expected to lead the nation in population growth through 2020, according to a report to be released today by NAI Global.

People are moving to the region for a better quality of life, and companies are following in their quest for an educated workforce.

That's a driving force behind Denver's tightening commercial real estate market, said Greg Morris, president and chief executive of Fuller Real Estate.

"Virtually all product types are healthy right now and improving," Morris said. "Vacancies are dropping and rents are moving up."

Small- to mid-size tenants are generating the most leasing activity, which is preferable to relying on one or two big companies to lease large blocks of space, Morris said.

"The other thing that's changing in Denver is the urban lifestyle and number of residential units being built downtown," he said. "Ten years ago after 5 p.m., everybody went home and Denver was pretty quiet. Now we're moving into a 24/7 downtown."

With about 2.4 million people, Denver-Aurora is the nation's 26th largest metropolitan service area. It has the 10th-largest downtown district in the country. The median age is 33, and 66 percent of the population is between 18 and 65 years old, according to the NAI Global report. a

A new community hospital opening next month in Brighton hopes to deliver not only babies but jobs and economic growth to the northeast metro area.

Platte Valley Medical Center, located on a cramped 6-acre campus east of downtown Brighton, will relocate to a 50-acre spread off Interstate 76 and East 144th Avenue on July 10.

The hospital is the centerpiece in a larger 2,000-acre development expected to house medical offices, nursing-care facilities, hotels, a wide array of retail and 3,000 homes once it is built out.

"The hospital has the ability to direct Brighton's economic destiny," said Ted Shipman, a developer with Bromley Cos. and one of the first to conceive the idea of a new hospital on empty prairie near Barr Lake.

Brighton proper has about 30,000 residents, double the population it claimed in 1990, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

The city's surrounding trade area is home to more than 150,000 people, said Susan Stanton, executive director of the Brighton Economic Development Corp.

"Hospitals are always No. 1 in a community amenity that people are looking for. People may not need it, but they want to know it is there," she said.

Growth in Brighton and surrounding areas of Weld and Adams counties has pushed the hospital, first opened in 1961, to the limits, said John Hicks, president and CEO of Platte Valley Medical Center.

"This facility is at capacity," Hicks said. "We are out of beds."

Despite tripling the size of the emergency room over the years, it is often overcrowded. Expectant mothers are being sent elsewhere because of a lack of space, Hicks said.

Platte Valley looked at several options, including acquiring land from a nearby park and neighborhood, before deciding to go with an entirely new campus, Hicks said.

The new \$138 million, 78-bed hospital will have state-of-the-art medical imaging equipment, including the first installation of a Toshiba Vantage MRI system outside of Japan.

Wireless tracking

It will be one of the few hospitals in North America with a wireless system allowing doctors and staff to track patients' vital signs from anywhere in the facility.

Platte Valley also will host Colorado's first special-care nursery, with eight private rooms that allow parents to sleep alongside their premature babies.

One of the most original things about the hospital is the close connection between the community and the hospital administration.



(jc) Platte: a Brighton Co. June 7, 2007: Two Location #1. New Platte Valley Medical Campus, 1600 Prairie Center Parkway. (DENVER POST PHOTO BY JOHN PRIETO) Contact-Cynthia Gleason-303-548-5158 (THE DENVER POST | JOHN PRIETO)

Top Stories

[Murder suspects had Colo. past](#)
[Boulder Creek tuber bumps into body](#)
[New Castle fire nearly in hand](#)
[Human error idled United flights](#)
[Shuttle landing re-set for Friday](#)
[Study: First-borns are smarter](#)

Most Popular

[Colo. rescue for doomed grizzly](#)
[Murder suspects had Colo. past](#)
[Broncos center Eslinger honored](#)
[NCAA to make CU announcement](#)
['4Real' nixed as baby name](#)

Most Commented

[Rockies fans could use a pitcher \(baseball, not beer\)](#)
[Dem delegates search Denver for green hotels](#)
[Schools the state is to inspect](#)
[Woman killed by her own pet dog](#)
[Pacman wanted by Vegas police](#)

Not only does Platte Valley tith 10 percent of its operating income back to the community, it also is backing plans to use the campus as an economic development engine, Hicks said.

"There is a common vision between what you see going into the hospital and our community vision," Stanton said.

Brighton residents raised \$7.5 million in funds that made the new facility possible. In turn, Platte Valley is selling its old building for \$2 million, a discounted price that will make it easier to redevelop the hospital for community uses.

Platte Valley is also working closely with economic development officials and the main developer, THF Realty, a holding of sports and real estate mogul Stan Kroenke.

"We have used the hospital as the draw to spark future development," said Jim Lewis, a project manager with THF, which owns the land around the hospital and is based in St. Louis.

THF has reserved 35 acres for a medical office park, which has a 60,000-square-foot building in the planning stages.

Negotiations are underway for a skilled nursing center to house residents needing more intensive supervision and a surgical center, Lewis said.

Also on the drawing board across the street from the hospital is a 3,000-home development that will connect into a 17.5-mile trail system.

Those homes will include high-end trophy properties for doctors and administrators, as well as patio homes for seniors who want to live closer to health care providers.

The new facility will employ 500 people, including 70 primary-care physicians and 180 specialists on staff.

Three hotels pending

Given that the hospital is expected to draw patients from surrounding rural counties, THF is working on providing beds for visiting families.

"I have three hotel deals in the works right across from the hospital," Lewis said, describing them as nationally known brands.

And if "retail therapy" ever becomes a clinical treatment, it will be widely available right next door to the hospital at Prairie Center, which is on track to become a regional retail hub.

"People need to get away from the stresses of what is going on," Hicks said.

The proximity of the new hospital to the new retail development allows Brighton to become a showcase for what some bill as "medical retail."

Hicks envisions stores providing alternative treatments, vitamins and health care products, like Better Back, going in near the hospital.

Another key component of the development plan is the reuse of the old facility.

Although the hospital board could have sought the maximum dollar for its property and land, it instead focused on the greatest return to the community, said Manuel Esquibel, assistant city manager. The Brighton Urban Renewal Authority is in talks with Front Range Community College about relocating its campus from the old Adams County courthouse to the hospital.

Although the community college likes the location, costs will determine whether it can move there.

"We are very interested in the hospital. If the money can work out, we will work real hard at it," said Andy Dorsey, vice president for Front Range's Westminster/North Metro campuses.

College may train EMTs

Although the Brighton campus doesn't have the critical mass with 200 students to become a health care training hub, the community college may pursue a program to train paramedics and EMTs, a natural given the built-in emergency room.

Other potential tenants include an Adams County Workforce Center and a Headstart program, Esquibel said.

The city is working on bringing in a program through the U.S. Department of Labor that trains nursing assistants to work in providing long-term care to seniors.

Salud Family Health Center has agreed to purchase the Orrel Daniel Health Pavilion, a medical building attached to the old hospital, to provide care to the indigent and uninsured.

"They recognize what our overall economic development goals are. Our goal is job creation," Esquibel said.

Staff writer Aldo Svaldi can be reached at 303-954-1410 or asvaldi@denverpost.com.

[Print](#) [Email](#) [Return to Top](#) [» Subscribe](#)

ARTICLE COMMENTS

[Login](#) | [Sign Up](#)