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Coeur d'Alene Press

Coeur d'Alene, Idaho

Tuesday, February 20, 2018

Brian Walker

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WHY WAIT?

Hospital ramps up expansion with \$12 million, 32-bed project

COEUR d'ALENE — The demand for Kootenai Health's services has even outpaced the growing hospital's expectations, fueling the need for a \$12 million, 30,000-square-foot expansion two years earlier than expected.

The project, referred to as 3 East — the third floor of the east side of the hospital that faces U.S. 95 — will feature 32 private patient rooms and raise the hospital's capacity to 331 total patient beds.

'This expansion is designed to meet the needs of our growing community,' Kootenai Health CEO Jon Ness said. 'As Kootenai Health continues to expand the types of care it provides and as more services are available here, more patients are coming to Kootenai Health for care. This includes patients from other regional communities.'

The project is slated to begin next month and be completed in early spring 2019.

The floor is already shelled in and was planned as the third and final phase of a facility master plan that began in 2012.

'We anticipated this growth, but the pace is faster than we thought,' said Jeremy Evans, executive vice president of hospital and regional operations.

Kootenai Health is adding 32 private patient rooms that will look like this to the third floor of the east building in Coeur d'Alene. The \$12 million, 30,000-square-foot project will start in March and be completed in early 2019. It will raise the hospital's total bed capacity to 331 patient rooms.

The hospital's total annual patient discharges steadily increased each of the past several years, rising from 12,507 in 2012 to 14,279 in 2017. The expansion will be used to care for patients with a variety of conditions, including general illness, cancer, neurological, stroke, trauma and possibly epilepsy, a new focus Kootenai plans to serve.

'We're adding additional services to keep patients close to home,' Evans said. 'There are also times, such as surges in the flu, in which we are very full, so this will help ease that.'

The rooms will be larger than most of the hospital's older rooms, allowing more space for family members and care providers. They will also feature the latest technology to serve the needs of the patient.

Kim Anderson, the hospital's communications and marketing director, said staff has not yet estimated the number of new jobs the new third floor will create.

'But over the past few years Kootenai Health typically adds 100 new full-time equivalents (FTEs) annually to accommodate growth and the addition of new services,' she said.

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Evans said the project will not raise taxes. It will be paid for as part of Kootenai Health's capital budget, cash reserves and community donations to the Kootenai Health Foundation.

'Kootenai Health has not assessed taxes since 1995 and there are no plans to assess taxes now or in the future,' a press release states.

The first phase of the master plan was the \$57 million east wing expansion, which included completing the first two floors of the building. The second phase, which is about 85 percent complete, is the \$45 million expansion of the emergency department, operating areas and support services such as pharmacy and supply.

The service expansions have resulted in increased patient volumes and a need for additional patient beds, Evans said.

The three phases will have expanded Kootenai's campus by a total of about 134,000 square feet.

The future project will also bring Kootenai closer to its goal of having 100 percent private rooms.

After the project is completed, Kootenai will have just 12 semi-private rooms remaining.

'Those will be the last to fill and we'll maintain a private occupancy in a semiprivate room, unless there's a surge in capacity,' Evans said.

The expansion will make Kootenai the third largest hospital in the state behind St. Luke's in Boise and St. Alphonsus in Nampa.

Evans said a fourth floor to the east building is not planned. If future expansion is needed, it will be with a separate building.

'Thank you to our community members for their continued patience as we grow to better serve our community,' Ness said.

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