

St. Luke's charts expansion in McCall

St. Luke's Health System will build a new hospital in McCall, nearly doubling the size of the existing hospital.

Technically, the work is being described as a remodel and expansion of the existing 47,000-square-foot building, which was built in 1956. The \$35 million upgrade will double the number of operating rooms and emergency rooms, according to promotional materials. But all four operating rooms and eight emergency rooms will be new in the expanded space, as will all 17 in-patient beds.

"It will be a new hospital on an old site," St. Luke's McCall Administrator Sean McCallister said. "We want to make sure we have space for the future. This is a legacy project, once in a lifetime. Our vision is to build something that will serve the region for decades to come."

The two-story expansion will be built on a gravel parking lot to the north of the existing hospital. The existing 15-bed inpatient area and two operating rooms will be demolished, and much of the old hospital will be remodeled for enlarged imaging facilities, labs, cardiopulmonary, dining room and pharmacy.

Ancillary support services will also be housed in the remodeled existing hospital building.

"We are now wheeling supplies over snowy, icy parking lots," McCallister said. "Laundry service is across the street. We are bringing that in-house."

Planned for more than a decade, the expansion now is at the in-house design phase with an outside architect expected to join the project in the coming months. The first artistic renditions could be released in the next four to six months.

The new hospital main entrance will be reoriented to face State Street to the east. The existing hospital faces west and is virtually invisible when driving on Lake Street (State Route 55), even after turning onto State Street.

McCallister expects final approvals from St. Luke's in the second quarter of 2018 with site work including utilities starting in summer 2018. Construction could follow in spring or summer 2019 with completion in phases over the following three years.

A new or expanded hospital has been discussed for more than a decade, but the McCall Memorial Hospital District didn't foresee having the money to undertake the project. The district decided to join St. Luke's in 2010 on the condition that St. Luke's improve McCall Memorial.

St. Luke's is paying for \$30 million, and community donations will pay for the other \$5 million. So far, \$4 million has been raised.

“Where would this community come up with that kind of money if we didn’t have a partner like (St. Luke’s)?” said Derek Williamson, board chair of the McCall Memorial Hospital District, which still owns the hospital property that St. Luke’s leases and operates. “It would have been a hard hurdle to come over.”

St. Luke’s takes McCall hospital into the future

A 14,000-square-foot McCall Memorial Hospital was built in 1956, with 3,000 square feet added in 1962 and a 30,000-square-foot expansion and remodel in 1996.

“We have only 60 percent of the space we need,” McCallister said. “The mechanical systems are dated. It’s difficult to incorporate some new technologies and IT systems.”

He said one public corridor has to be shut down when patients are transferred to and from the operating room and in-patient rooms.

Since McCall Memorial Hospital joined St. Luke’s in 2010, the health care dynamic has shifted in the Long Valley. Previously, many Valley County residents sought health care in Boise.

Added services in recent years, such as a full-time orthopedic surgeon, wound care, the first permanent MRI machine and infusion services including oncology have drawn a large share of locals to St. Luke’s McCall. The increasing number of second residences has also spiked patient counts as some Boise residents now choose to have their health care in McCall rather than the Treasure Valley, McCallister said.

St. Luke’s McCall Medical Center reports emergency room visits have increased by 42 percent since 2010, with surgeries climbing 182 percent and lab tests up 36 percent in the same time period.

The McCall emergency room now transfers only 4 percent of patients to Boise. St. Luke’s also accepts many more insurance policies than McCall Memorial did, he said.

“We’ve become a regional health care hub,” McCallister said.

The new hospital is being designed in an era where hospitals are quickly evolving and nobody’s quite sure what hospitals will look like in the future. Recent years have seen a drastic shift to outpatient care. In 1956, the community saw a need for 12 inpatient rooms with 15 beds. Just 17 inpatient rooms are penciled into the expansion.

Three of the 17 patient rooms will be set aside for expectant mothers to stay in the same room for labor and delivery.

“What’s the future of hospitals? Is it acute care?” McCallister posed. “How do we deliver the best outcomes at the lowest cost? We believe the future of health care is not with this. It’s care in home, preventative and wellness.”

Valley County is the healthiest county in Idaho. The County Health Rankings & Roadmaps by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute say Valley County residents see the lowest level of premature death and are in the top 10 percent of healthiest U.S counties.

“We’re lucky we’re already on a very high plateau,” Williamson said.

Williamson said the new hospital will help attract and retain medical staff.

“The staff will have a professional environment they will want to work in,” he said.

St. Luke’s explores covered outdoor passages

A big, new hospital isn’t the only thing on the mind of St. Luke’s McCall Administrator Sean McCallister.

There is also the scattering of clinics across the streets and parking lot from the existing hospital and what will be the expanded hospital.

“The clinics will need to expand in the future,” McCallister said. “We’d love to connect the clinic to the hospital with an enclosed corridor. That’s our vision down the road.”

These include the Payette Lakes and McCall medical clinics as well as the orthopedic surgery, rehabilitation therapy and integrative medicine clinics.

Orthopedics in McCall has grown “by leaps and bound”

Orthopedics – the specialty involving bones, muscles and ligaments – has evolved dramatically since the St. Luke’s Health System took on health care in McCall in 2010.

Dr. Greg Irvine became McCall’s first full-time orthopedic surgeon in spring 2011. St. Luke’s McCall is recruiting to add a second orthopedic surgeon in 2018, Administrator Sean McCallister said.

This upgrade in orthopedics allowed the addition of knee and hip joint replacement surgery in 2012.

“Orthopedic service has grown by leaps and bounds,” McCallister said.

The number of orthopedic surgeries multiplied from 17 in 2010 to 377 in 2016, hospital spokeswoman Laura Crawford said.

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