

CLOSER TO CARE: St. Luke's prepares to open new Nampa hospital

NAMPA — Giraffe Warmers are lined up in the hallway on the third floor, standing ready to keep newborns warm.

The 10 beds in the intensive care unit await the hospital's most critically sick patients, while state-of-the-art operating equipment is ready for heart patients.

St. Luke's Health System is putting the finishing touches on its new hospital set to open this fall in Nampa.

The three-story, 87-bed hospital was built onto the existing St. Luke's Health Plaza on Midland Boulevard and is connected to the existing building. When it's complete, it will become Canyon County's third and newest hospital.

St. Luke's has hired 400 full-time employees to staff the new hospital in addition to the hundreds of construction workers — up to 350 per day — who have built the facility, according to Ed Castledine, the hospital's administrator. An opening date for the new hospital has not been set.

When the new hospital opens, a large portion of the building will still be an unfinished shell. That will eventually be filled in as medical office space.

What to expect at St. Luke's Nampa

St. Luke's first expanded into Nampa with a 120,000-square-foot medical plaza that opened in 2012. That brought a 24-hour emergency department among other services.

The health system is adding 200,000 square feet and a list of new services to the existing building, including space for medical offices.

Castledine said the health system started by designing the perfect rooms for patients and providers and built the new hospital around those rooms. The layout was also designed in a way that maximizes sight lines for nurses to be able to easily monitor patients' rooms.

The first floor includes an intensive care unit, an outpatient pharmacy and telehealth services. The second floor includes operating rooms and labs, and the third floor of the new hospital is dedicated to women's services and will include a neonatal intensive care unit.

Up until 2014, parents of newborns in need of intensive care had no choice but to go to Boise. Now, there will be three options for NICU care in Canyon County, including at St. Luke's and Saint Alphonsus hospitals in Nampa and West Valley Medical Center in Caldwell.

The St. Luke's NICU in Nampa is designed to keep babies and parents together with spacious rooms that also have room for families. Seven of the new hospital's 14 labor and delivery rooms are dedicated for NICU.

"The evidence is clear that both mom and baby do significantly better when they stay together," Castledine said.

There's a large population in Canyon County that does not have access or sufficient access to good prenatal care, which adds to the need for a NICU, said Michaela Schulte, hospitalist medical director for St. Luke's.

"The chances that the baby does need a NICU-level support is unfortunately higher," Schulte said.

St. Luke's is one of just five hospitals in the country to design its NICU this way, because of the large size of the rooms, Castledine said.

The third floor also features traditional labor and delivery rooms and two cesarean section suites.

There's also a room known as a butterfly room for parents who won't leave the hospital with their babies. This room is designed to be a quiet place for parents to spend time with and grieve a stillborn baby or a baby that isn't expected to live long after birth.

The third floor area will be locked down for the safety of mothers and babies, and the entire hospital will be locked down at night. That's a change for St. Luke's, Castledine said, and something the health system is piloting with the new hospital.

New hospital wired for telehealth

The ICU suites in the new hospital feature a TV monitor with a camera above it and audio equipment. This allows a team of providers to care for patients remotely.

The provider rings a door bell to indicate to the people in the room that the camera is coming on and it moves into place.

If the hospital has a stroke patient, it can access a remote specialist using the telehealth system to provide care right away, Schulte said.

The telehealth is in addition to a 24-hour nursing staff and a critical care physician, Schulte said. The room is also connected so information about the patient is made available to providers, and they can tell through an algorithm if the patient is getting better or worse, she said.

The 10-bed ICU also has specialized chairs designed to get patients moving again as quickly as possible to aid in recovery.

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Meeting a need in Canyon County

The new St. Luke's hospital in Nampa will be the Boise-based health system's third hospital in the area. It operates hospitals in Boise and Meridian along with smaller medical plazas. There's also a major expansion project underway at the Boise hospital.

St. Luke's officials said the new Nampa hospital will meet the needs of a growing population in Canyon County, and provide St. Luke's care closer to home.

Patients at the Nampa facility who require hospitalization currently have to be admitted elsewhere, and St. Luke's sees the impact of that at its Meridian hospital.

"We know at our Meridian hospital that nearly a third of those patients come from Nampa and Caldwell, and so that tells us that there are people who want to access St. Luke's services, but they're having to come all the way to Meridian to get that," St. Luke's CEO David Pate said at the new hospital's ground breaking ceremony in 2015.

To help identify the community's current and future health care needs, St. Luke's formed the 16-member Canyon Community Council several years ago and relies on that council for input on what those needs are.

The new St. Luke's hospital is part of a recent boom in health care growth in Canyon County. Saint Alphonsus opened a new hospital in Nampa at the corner of Interstate 84 and Garrity Boulevard earlier this year. The new, 100-bed hospital replaced an older facility on 12th Avenue Road in Nampa, but Saint Alphonsus also recently opened a smaller, neighborhood hospital on 12th.

West Valley Medical Center in Caldwell has also continued to expand services and add on to its facility. Most recently, the hospital opened a new NICU.

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