



News

Grace-Metropolitan land-swap deal brings multiple benefits

A land swap that is part of the proposed mega-hospital plan will give the City of Windsor a prime piece of property in the heart of South Walkerville and a chance to avert the decay that happened at the former Grace Hospital site.

Dave Waddell • Windsor Star
Jul 15, 2015 • July 15, 2015 • 3 minute read





The Windsor Regional Hospital MET campus is seen in Windsor on Wednesday, July 15, 2015. (TYLER BROWNBRIDGE/The Windsor Star)

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“People kept telling us don’t create another Grace hospital mess,” said David Musyj, Windsor Regional Hospital president and CEO and mega-hospital steering committee co-chair. “I promised we wouldn’t and we haven’t with these plans.”



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What Musyj didn’t imagine during the public meetings where he heard those comments was an opportunity to bring the Grace site back to life as an urgent care centre that will be a satellite to the new mega-hospital to be built on County Road 42.

Then the city indicated it was open to swapping the 6.5-acre Grace site — a symbol of urban decay until it was torn down in 2013 — for Windsor Regional’s 14.5-acre Metropolitan campus.

There’s no money involved in the swap, but Windsor Regional is responsible for demolishing the hospital

and presenting the city with a clean site ready to redevelop.

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said. It's something that happened after we had the other stuff in place.



The former Grace Hospital site is seen in Windsor on Wednesday, July 15, 2015. (TYLER BROWNBRIDGE/The Windsor Star)

THE VALUE OF 14 ACRES AT MET IS MORE THAN THE SIX ACRES AT GRACE, BUT IT'S WORTH IT TO GET A CHANCE TO DO something at Grace. It allows Windsor Regional to maintain a prominent presence downtown."

The steering committee had already hammered out plans for new uses for the Ouellette campus and the swap solved Windsor Regional's problem of what to do with the Met campus.

"It allows us control of development on the (Met) site," said Windsor mayor Drew Dilkens. "It's too early to tell what we'll do. We're considering consulting the neighbourhood to what the locals want for the future."

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The site could end up being developed for several uses, with commercial activity fronting Tecumseh Road East and residential in behind, he said.

Having the urgent care centre on University Avenue West also dovetails nicely with the city's plan to revitalize the street.

The city plans to spend \$5 million improving University Avenue with boulevards, trees, bike lanes and other transportation improvements. The street will serve as the main link between the University of Windsor's main and downtown campuses.

"Having Grace active will rejuvenate the area," Dilkens said. "We should have a health-care focus back downtown."

It's a chance to not only redefine how health care is delivered, but a chance to enhance health sciences-related education and serve as an economic driver.

The new hospital will now be able to house the Schulich Medical and Dentistry School, something that wasn't possible at the Ouellette Avenue campus. That's also one of the preconditions for Windsor to land a stand-alone med school.

Musyj said he anticipates a variety of businesses will cluster around the mega-hospital and that it will also spur residential development.

"In planning from day one, medical research and education were one of the main drivers," Musyj said. "Developing the central core (of the city), we also wanted to support that. We didn't want to leave any big, empty properties behind."

Before any plans can move forward the Ministry of Health must approve the project. That approval could come as early as next year.

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