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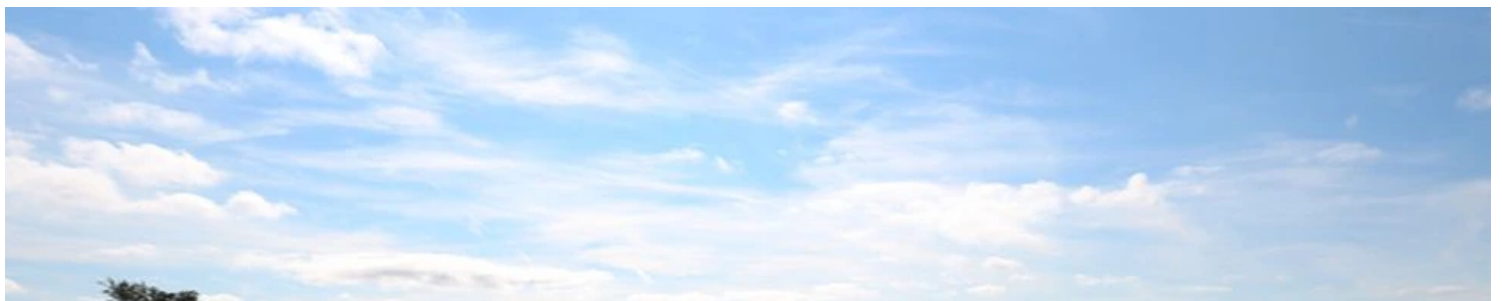


News

Mega-hospital could turn Windsor into a hub for health sciences jobs, say officials

Just days after news broke about the locations of the new mega-hospital on County Road 42 and its three satellite sites, talk has already emerged about using the opportunity to attract new businesses and jobs from the health sector

Derek Spalding • Windsor Star
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Site of the new mega-hospital to be built on County Rd. 42 at 9th Concession in Windsor, Ont. (JASON KRYK/The Windsor Star)

The newly unveiled proposal for a revamped regional hospital in Windsor is already attracting potential investment from the private sector, health officials said Thursday.

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Just days after news broke about the locations of the new mega-hospital on County Road 42 and its three satellite sites, talk has already emerged about using the opportunity to attract new businesses and jobs from the health sector.



The business community came out with enthusiastic support for the new regional hospital project. Not only are investors salivating to be part of site redevelopment at the various locations, there is significant potential to turn the region into a health sciences hub, said Matt Marchand, head of the Windsor-Essex Chamber of Commerce.

“This is potentially one of the biggest investments in an (industry) we’re not particularly known for, “ he said. “This is an excellent opportunity to develop a new industry.”

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Marchand could be right on the money with his prediction. Other regions that have built similar style mega-hospitals have experienced widespread economic spinoffs, particularly in health sciences, according to Windsor Regional Hospital CEO David Musyj.

“That’s the historic pattern that these other mega-hospitals have seen in other regions,” he said, recognizing the obvious economic boost the region could see when the project unfolds in the next decade. “We had patient needs in the region, which was our primary goal throughout our planning, but certainly this is going to be an economic driver.”

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The new hospital itself won’t demand too much in terms of an expanded workforce. Overall staffing levels at Windsor Regional will remain the same with about 4,000 employees plus 500 physicians.

Hotel-Dieu Grace may need some additional staff, but the figures would be minimal, said CEO Janice Kaffer.

“We’ll probably have to hire some new people. We have six new (dialysis) stations to serve,” she said. “I’m not sure of the numbers right now. We’ll get into the planning stages very soon.”

The real economic benefits will come from the spinoffs. And the enthusiasm about that prospect is already building, just days after news of the locations leaked to the public.

“We’ve already had calls from a few companies that want to be part of this,” Musyj said. “When we get to (Stage 2), there’s only going to be more.”

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Aside from fostering health-related investment in the region, Marchand — like many others — anticipates new development around the main hospital site on County Road 42, but also around the other sites within Windsor’s urban core.

Investors are sure to flock to the area of University Avenue West surrounding the site of the former Grace Hospital, which will become a satellite urgent care centre, according to Marchand.

“You’ve got the Grace site, which will now have the highest and best use of that property,” he said. “It’s going to attract new development to that area.”

Attracting new business at this particular location gets even easier with the city’s \$5-million plan for an overall rejuvenation of a stretch of University. The plan calls for boulevards, trees, bike lanes and other transportation improvements.

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