



News

Mega-hospital site drawing rave reviews from Windsor region

Mayor Drew Dilkens says residents in the city's core come out on top in this deal because services will still be offered at the Ouellette campus of Windsor Regional Hospital, while a new emergency department will be built at the former Grace Hospital site

Derek Spalding • Windsor Star
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Art LaRiviere discusses the new location of the Mega Hospital at Windsor Regional Hospital's Met Campus on Wednesday, July 15, 2015. (DYLAN KRISTY/The Windsor Star)

Considerable support for locating the region's [new mega-hospital](#)

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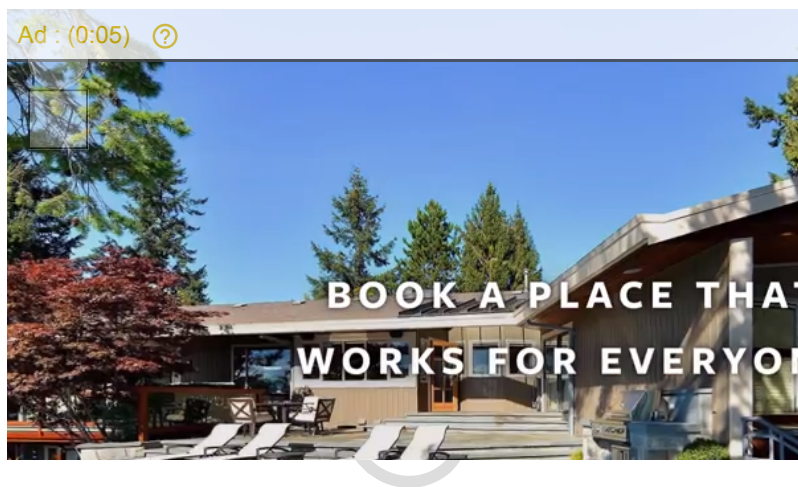
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near the Windsor airport emerged Wednesday after news of the site selection went public before the official announcement.



Politicians in Windsor and the county expect the project will spur new development in a largely underdeveloped area near County Road 42 and Concession 9. Several residents endorsed the plan too, saying they'll have easier access to the new facility.

One citizens group maintains the proposed project should have stayed within the urban core, but most officials spoke in favour of the new location. They particularly like other aspects of the \$2-billion plan that call for satellite hospital sites

in Windsor's urban centre.

Mayor Drew Dilkens says residents in the city's core come out on top in this deal because services will still be offered at the Ouellette campus of Windsor Regional Hospital, while a new emergency department will be built at the former Grace Hospital site. Plus, there will be an expansion of the non-acute care Hotel-Dieu Grace Healthcare site on Prince Road.

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“If you look at all the changes being contemplated, the core wins,” Dilkens said.

One group of advocates, though, criticized the new location. Citizens for an Accountable Megahospital Planning Process lobbied long and hard to have the new facility built within the urban core, somewhere between the neighbourhoods of Sandwich and Riverside, and between Riverside Drive to Tecumseh Road.

The group issued a brief statement on its website, saying “a location that promotes unsustainable suburban sprawl, the continued development of prime agricultural lands, and the exodus of our urban core will undermine the health of our community in ways that go beyond the provision of primary health care.”

Members did not want to comment further, saying they remain cautious about the plan until more details are officially announced Thursday.

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- **Poll Question: Do you like the location of the new mega-hospital?**

City Coun. Rino Bortolin was also cautious about commenting on the site selection without having more details, but said he doesn't want the city to end up paying for the infrastructure costs required to get the site ready for such a huge facility.

If council allowed a private developer to plunk a project into the same location, Bortolin would expect that developer to cover costs of expanding several access roads and for connecting to city services, such as sewer and water.

"Many other locations had (services) already where there would be no need for major expenses," he said. "I am very pleased with the overall plan and its global impact on the Windsor health community, but there are some serious questions attached to this site."

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

Windsor won't be picking up any tabs for connecting the new hospital to city services, said Dilkens, but there are already plans to expand several of the roads connecting to that area.

The city is doing an environmental assessment for the possible expansion of Lauzon Parkway, which could extend the main thoroughfare from E.C. Row Expressway in the north to Highway 401 and then possibly further south to Highway 3.

That assessment also looks at the potential widening of County Road 42 from Walker Road in the west to

Puce Road in the east.

Paying for such infrastructure improvements only benefits the city when new investors develop around the hospital, Dilkens said.

Having that kind of transportation access to a new mega-hospital closer to Windsor's southern city limits would also give most Essex County residents easier access to health services, said Warden Tom Bain.

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"We can reach the hospital from anywhere in the county in 20 minutes," he said. "If it was put downtown, you could easily add another 20 minutes onto that time."

Several residents gave their approval for the site as well Wednesday.

"It's kind of good for people living out of town," said Art LaRiviere. "I live in Belle River, so that would be closer than having to come into the city."

Sally Field originally thought the new location would be quite far away for many people in Windsor, but after some consideration, she give the plan a thumbs up as well.

"A first we kind of thought it was far away for people with emergencies, but then it seems like it will be within reach for people all over the city," she said, after walking out of Windsor Regional's Met campus with her son Ewan.

Both Bain and Dilkens anticipate the mega-hospital, at its chosen site, will spur new development in an under-developed area.

“There will be spinoff commercial and residential development both in the city and the county,” Bain said.

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Sally Field discusses the new location of the Mega Hospital at Windsor Regional Hospital's Met Campus on Wednesday, July 15, 2015. (DYLAN KRISTY/The Windsor Star)



Ken Bondy discusses the new location of the Mega Hospital at Windsor Regional Hospital's Met Campus on Wednesday, July 15, 2015. (DYLAN KRISTY/The Windsor Star)



Bernard Masse discusses the new location of the Mega Hospital at Windsor Regional Hospital's Met Campus on Wednesday, July 15, 2015. (DYLAN KRISTY/The Windsor Star)



Art LaRiviere discusses the new location of the Mega Hospital at Windsor Regional Hospital's Met Campus on Wednesday, July 15, 2015. (DYLAN KRISTY/The Windsor Star)

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