

Traverse City News and Events

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Munson Buys Property For Expansion

by **Gayle Neu**



Members is the second property MMC purchased in the last year.

Munson Medical Center's long-discussed expansion has taken another – albeit quiet – step forward.

The Ticker has learned that, after purchasing the Sixth Street Drug Property last year, the hospital now has acquired another neighboring property: Members Credit Union at 120 Beaumont Place. Is this purchase part of a plan to buy up the block?

Steve Tongue, vice president of facilities and plant engineering at MMC, says no decisions have been made about construction, but the hospital needs to prepare for future expansion, which could include a bed tower, the build-out of existing space for patient beds, and a possible cancer center.

He says the hospital is near capacity and, based on current growth figures, could max out within five years.

“We don’t want to wait until we’re in a crisis mode and have to start building,” Tongue says. “In healthcare, construction can take as long as five years.”

With no where to grow but north, Munson is eyeing the block across Sixth Street as the panacea for its growing pains. Says Tongue: “Because future expansion has been toward the north, we’ve looked for opportunities to acquire property (there).” He adds that northern growth fits with the City of Traverse City Master Plan and zoning, and allows the hospital to connect to existing services.

Munson is bordered by Grand Traverse Commons to the south, Kid’s Creek neighborhood to the east and difficult topography to the west.

In June, Munson hired Grand Rapids-based URS and Southfield-based Barton Malow for the initial design phase.

They'll address future construction possibilities and refine project costs, land requirements, and what services should be located where.

Once completed by early spring, information will be reviewed and a capital budget for fiscal year 2013 prepared. If approved, design and permitting for any planned work will begin.

All this is part of Munson's Master Facility Plan, which is guiding its efforts to improve patient care during the next five to 10 years.

What about Copper Ridge?

Is Munson Healthcare still eyeing Copper Ridge for a possible \$50 million cancer center? Tongue says no decisions have been made.

"We continue to evaluate on- and off-campus options for a cancer center. There's been a lot of attention paid to (Copper Ridge), but we haven't made a decision to where it's going," he says.

Some non-clinical support services will be moved to newly-acquired space at Copper Ridge this fiscal year – the result of a department-by-department analysis of what should be located on campus, off campus but within easy walking distance, or at another site.

"We're very attuned to our neighbors," Tongue says. "We don't want to keep ramming stuff on campus. We have to be just as intentional as to what we can move off campus."

Munson is also moving ahead with plans to renovate Building 29, which will house support services, and will continue restoration work on Kids Creek, whose annual flooding issues have proven problematic for residents in surrounding neighborhoods.