

**CHIPPEWA VALLEY HEALTH COOPERATIVE EVALUATING ST. JOSEPH'S
AS BRIDGE TO NEW HOSPITAL**

GOAL IS TO TAKE CARE OF PATIENTS FASTER

CHIPPEWA FALLS, WI – December 9, 2024 – With a goal of taking care of patients as fast as possible, the Chippewa Valley Health Cooperative has signed a letter of intent with HSHS to purchase and reopen the St. Joseph's Hospital facility in Chippewa Falls to provide urgently needed healthcare services while the Cooperative builds the [planned](#) new state-of-the-art hospital, which is slated to open in fall 2027.

The Cooperative has until early April 2025 to conduct thorough due diligence to determine if reopening the hospital is financially possible. The St. Joseph's facility has significant deferred maintenance that may need to be addressed before the hospital can be reopened. If it's feasible, the Cooperative could open its doors at the St. Joseph's campus as early as fall 2025.

Chippewa Valley residents need access to substantially increased healthcare services locally and quickly to address the large gaps in service created when the two regional hospitals and 19 clinics were closed earlier this year.

"Since we started the Cooperative, we've been singularly focused on making high-quality healthcare accessible and affordable for Chippewa Valley residents as fast as possible," said Robert Krause, Chair of the Chippewa Valley Health Cooperative. "The new facility we've planned in Lake Hallie is fundamental to the long-term sustainability of the hospital. At the same time, if we can, reopening the St. Joseph's facility in 2025 will help us serve patients faster and doesn't impede our plans or ability to open the new hospital."

Research the Cooperative conducted and commissioned earlier this year definitively showed the need for a flexible, modern, state-of-the-art facility designed for the future in an easily accessible location to best serve the greater Chippewa Valley area region.

Mike Sanders, Managing Director of 1100 Partners and former CEO of Monroe Clinic, who has been working hand-in-hand with the Cooperative since it was formed, added, "There is no silver bullet to solve this situation sustainably for the long term. This important work takes considerable time and resources. If the Cooperative can reopen the St. Joseph's facility, it will

be an important bridge strategy to help close the healthcare gap residents are experiencing now as the new hospital is being built.”

Chippewa Valley Health Cooperative begins the onsite evaluation process this week.

“We ask for the community’s patience while we do the necessary investigation and due diligence to evaluate whether reopening the St. Joseph’s is financially feasible,” added Krause. “We have an expert team on the case who wants to make this happen and are looking at every option so that the Cooperative can start taking care of patients as soon as possible.”

The Cooperative has hired recognized experts in hospital administration and operations and is well supported by University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension specialists in trauma care, emergency medical services, and public facilities financing.

Services

St. Joseph’s Hospital had fewer services and less capacity when it closed than what is planned for the new community hospital in Lake Hallie.

Assuming the Cooperative is able to reopen the St. Joseph’s facility, it would immediately offer the following healthcare services using existing facilities: 25 hospital beds, with a 5-bed Intensive Care Unit (ICU), an Emergency Department, Medical-Surgical services, Labor & Delivery, wound care with two hyperbaric chambers, and comprehensive diagnostic services, including laboratory, radiology, and cardiac rehabilitation therapies. The Cooperative would also add cancer treatment services before the new hospital is opened.

In addition, if it can reopen the St. Joseph’s facility, the Cooperative is committed to reopening the morgue to serve the surrounding counties.

Need For New Hospital

The Cooperative’s new 144,000-square-foot state-of-the-art hospital will be a flexible facility including 48 hospital beds, with a 12-bed Intensive Care Unit (ICU), an Emergency Department, Medical-Surgical services, Labor & Delivery, critical care units, a comprehensive Cancer Center, and comprehensive diagnostic services, including laboratory, radiology, and cardiology services. The new hospital will also have a comprehensive therapy unit to offer physical, occupational, and speech therapies.

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The Lake Hallie location for the new hospital was chosen based on substantial research on regional traffic flow, demographics, and projected growth patterns for Wisconsin. On the west side of the Highway 53 North-South corridor between Chippewa Falls and Eau Claire, the new hospital will also have convenient access to Interstate 94 and East-West County Highways 29 and 12. Importantly, the new hospital will be easily accessible for emergency services from the entire region.

Compared to the over 50-year-old St. Joseph's building, the new hospital will be built to meet the needs of modern medicine, be flexible to adapt to future changes in healthcare delivery practices easily, and will maximize energy efficiency, which will have a significant positive impact on operational costs over time.

"Medicine has changed dramatically in the last 50 years," added Sanders. "The cost to modernize and make the St. Joseph's facility financially feasible for the next 50 years is prohibitive. As a short-term solution, we hope the St. Joseph's facility can fill a critical need as the Cooperative builds the long-term, future-forward hospital."

The Cooperative board believes that most of the investment required to reopen the St. Joseph's facility will be transferrable to the new hospital.

Future Ideas

While in the long run it makes considerable economic sense to move to the planned new hospital, which will provide more capacity and services, the Cooperative commits to actively seeking other healthcare uses for the former St. Joseph's hospital site once the move to the new hospital is complete.

"Once we understand whether reopening St. Joseph's is possible, we will be in high gear to start caring for patients as fast as possible," said Krause. "Then we will turn our attention to exploring other healthcare uses for the building once we've opened the new full-service hospital in Lake Hallie."

Local Governance

As a cooperative whose community members come from the greater 18-county Chippewa Valley region, the Chippewa Valley Health Cooperative is governed by and accountable to the people of the Chippewa Valley.

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“We are committed to our community,” added Krause. “Our members will be responsible for participating in future planning and determining board leadership. One way Chippewa Valley residents can help the Cooperative is to become a [member](#).”

About the Cooperative

The Chippewa Valley Health Cooperative is an independently governed, locally rooted nonprofit organization committed to making high-quality healthcare accessible and affordable for the residents of the 18 counties in Wisconsin's Chippewa Valley region. Focused on patient-centered care, prevention, and education, the Cooperative strives to make a lasting, positive impact on the Chippewa Valley's health and well-being for generations to come. Formed on February 29, 2024, the Cooperative is a Wisconsin Chapter 193 cooperative and a registered 501c3 tax-exempt nonprofit organization. More information at www.chippewavalleyhealthcooperative.org.

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