

Cook planning medical complex

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By Candace Carlisle / Staff Writer

Cook Children's Health Care System signed the dotted line Monday afternoon to buy 12.5 acres to expand its Denton presence with a new children's medical complex.

The company plans a three-phase project, which first includes an urgent-care facility and a pediatric diagnostic imaging and radiology center, for the newly purchased acreage, said Bill Kennedy, a senior vice president for Cook Children's.

The second phase includes a 20,000-square-foot, two-story medical office building, he said.

The last phase will be like an umbrella -- or possible hospital -- capping the project years down the road, he said.

But the proposed hospital wouldn't sprout for another seven to 10 years at least, Kennedy said.

"The property was purchased with the thought in mind that someday it will accommodate a pediatric hospital," Kennedy said. "We did want to secure the land and location."

The acreage rests on the southeast corner of Rayzor Ranch Town Center in an area that was planned for medical offices, but has since been rezoned for Cook Children's trademark blue peaked roofs.

As development in the area booms and the population continues to expand, Cook Children's would like to grow with the Denton community, Kennedy said.

The Cook Children's name is a statement in Denton's favor, said Linda Ratliff, director of economic development for the city.

"Having Cook's here is just another gem in our crown as a medical destination," Ratliff said. "We are really excited they are coming."

Small arteries of the system have already been working in Denton for a while, with about 12 physicians with the Cook Children's network leasing medical office space from Presbyterian Hospital of Denton.

The Cook Children's system in Fort Worth continually brings new doctors and more specialties to the medical community through its health care network, according to officials with the health care system.

Already, Cook Children's specialties include cardiology, neurology, endocrinology and gastroenterology, Kennedy said.

There are about 30 locations and nearly 300 physicians linked to Cook Children's health care network in the North Texas area.

Other cities in the North Texas area, including Flower Mound, Keller and Lewisville, all have Cook Children's physicians like Denton, Kennedy said.

But the potential for a larger facility hasn't entered those cities.

The last time new blue roof peaks appeared was in 2001 for an urgent-care facility and outpatient surgery center for Cook Children's Northeast Center in Hurst.

Plans filed with the city of Denton by project developers include about 75,000 square feet of medical space and a full-service hospital, according to Chuck Russell, the city's planning supervisor.

The specific plans are still awaiting approval from Cook Children's governing body, Kennedy said.

"Denton is very important," Kennedy said. "It is our northernmost outreach area. We plan on being there for a long time."

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