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TMH, FSU Medicine, St. Joe Co. to bring medical campus to Panama City Beach

The campus will be known as FSUHealth.

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Three influential and intertwined entities — The St. Joe Co., Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare and FSU’s College of Medicine — intend to build a health care campus in Panama City Beach, marking TMH’s first operation in Bay County.

The news was announced late Thursday in a release from St. Joe. The health campus is planned to complement the Latitude Margaritaville Watersound community, a “55-and-better community” underway by St. Joe and its partners.

The initial plan calls for 3,500 homes stretching from near Panama City Beach to South Walton County. It is part of St. Joe’s Bay-Walton Sector Plan that encompasses approximately 110,500 acres with approximately 15 miles of frontage on the Intracoastal Waterway.

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FSU President John Thrasher updated the university’s Board of Trustees on the proposal last week, saying a joint proposal submitted in February had been accepted, allowing for planning to move forward.

The health care campus is planned for an 87-acre parcel near State Highway 79 and Phillip Griffitts Sr. Parkway, close to the Latitude Margaritaville Watersound community.

The letter of intent involves the three parties planning and developing the campus to initially include an ambulatory and urgent care center, according to the release. The land is being provided by the St. Joe Company. Groundbreaking could begin sometime next year.

Future development includes building an Emergency Center and 100-bed inpatient medical center offering services such as gastroenterology, urology, gynecology, cardiology and general surgery among others.

It will be overseen by a governing board.

“Convenient access to quality health care services is vital to the success of a growing region,” said Jorge Gonzalez, President and CEO of St. Joe Company and a member of FSU’s Board of Trustees.

“The creation of this planned health care campus will enhance the quality of life for local residents and provide tremendous opportunities for the entire region.”

This will mark TMH’s first presence in Bay County. It currently serves 17 counties in Florida and Georgia.

“High-quality health care with a focus on wellness is a component of an active community,” TMH President and CEO Mark O’Bryant said. “On behalf of Tallahassee Memorial, we are excited to work with St. Joe and FSU on this monumental project.

“Together, we have the opportunity to create an outstanding training and research platform for the people of Northwest Florida.”

O’Bryant said the campus will be known as FSUHealth.

Florida State University already has an academic campus in Panama City, which offers undergraduate and graduate programs. Its first student residential housing complex is expected by August.

The university plans to use the new medical campus to expand on research on successful aging and senior living technology as well as residency programs and educational rotations for its medical students and students from FSU Panama City.

“We are very pleased to work with St. Joe and TMH to help create and support the health care future for Panama City Beach and the surrounding area,” said Dr. John P. Fogarty, dean of the Florida State University College of Medicine.

“This is an exciting project that capitalizes on the ability of TMH to provide cutting edge care and FSU to expand the educational and research opportunities and to recruit the next generation of health care providers to the region.”

Panama City Beach Mayor Mark Sheldon said the venture could yield benefits for the region beyond health care. It also brings potential for job creation.

“This planned health care campus is so exciting as it will allow for a great opportunity for job creation in Panama City Beach and Bay County,” Sheldon said. “I would like to welcome TMH and FSU to the world’s most beautiful beaches and I look forward to this asset for our citizens and visitors alike.”

Latitude Margaritaville Watersound is being developed by St. Joe and Minto Communities USA and Margaritaville Holdings.

Latitude Margaritaville Watersound, which is inspired by the culture of singer-entrepreneur Jimmy Buffett, is the third Latitude Margaritaville to be developed, and the first in partnership with St. Joe, according to the release. Other communities are in Daytona Beach and near Hilton Head, South Carolina.

Gonzalez told The News Herald that Latitude is part of St. Joe's Bay-Walton Sector Plan, a 50-year vision to develop the two counties that already has the approval to build more than 150,000 homes.

While the project's current master plan calls for 3,500 homes, it could be expanded in the future based on demand, he said.

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