

Sarasota Memorial Hospital land swap looks to the future



Sarasota Memorial Hospital is finalizing a deal to secure this 30-acre parcel at the southeast corner of U.S. 41 and West Villages Parkway in North Port. (Photo by Google Inc.)

By [Maggie Clark](#)

Published: Monday, June 29, 2015 at 12:12 p.m.

Last Modified: Monday, June 29, 2015 at 12:28 p.m.

NORTH PORT - As south Sarasota County prepares for more explosive development over the next decade, Sarasota Memorial Hospital will be in the thick of it. The hospital is finalizing a deal to secure a 30-acre parcel at a major intersection, on the southeast corner of U.S. 41 and West Villages Parkway.

The hospital may build an outpatient center, medical offices or an urgent care clinic on the land, Sarasota Memorial CEO David Verinder said.

“We’ll wait until the community develops and then we’ll make a decision about what best meets the need there,” Verinder said.

The deal is effectively a land “swap.” Sarasota Memorial previously owned 128 acres about a mile south of U.S. 41 on West Villages Parkway, and built two buildings on the land when the hospital was part of the South County Resource Center. But those buildings have fallen into disrepair, and the land was more desirable to one of the area’s developers, Mattamy Homes, for future home sites.

In exchange, Mattamy offered to swap land with the hospital, trading the 128-acre parcel for the 30-acre parcel with frontage on U.S. 41 and much more visibility for a future hospital building.

Because Sarasota Memorial ended up with a smaller parcel as part of the trade, Mattamy paid the hospital the difference in value, about \$3.25 million, according to hospital records.

Securing the hospital for the development area known as the West Villages in North Port is critical to attracting new residents, said Marty Black, general manager of The Ranch, an area within the West Villages that will be developed into a master-planned community. During the next 40 years, Mattamy and other builders plan to build about 20,000 new homes in the West Villages area.

“It fits with our vision of wellness and activity for the community,” Black said, adding that his team worked with Sarasota Memorial for about a year to secure the land deal.

Black said they chose Sarasota Memorial instead of Venice Regional Bayfront Health or other hospitals because of Sarasota Memorial's large network of urgent care clinics and outpatient centers across the county.

“Sarasota Memorial has a business model that they've expanded throughout the county, and it also made sense to go with someone who had already invested in the area,” Black said.

The hospital's new site could hold about 50,000 to 75,000 square feet of medical office space, Black said. That is not big enough for a hospital, but could house an urgent care clinic or medical practice.

That would provide a key link to nearby medical services for future residents, who would live about 10 miles south of Venice Regional Bayfront Health and 15 miles north of Fawcett Memorial Hospital in Port Charlotte.

The hospital is also evaluating two other parcels in south Sarasota County with an eye toward the region's future development. In Laurel, the hospital owns 65 acres at Pinebrook and Laurel roads, and in North Port the hospital owns 32 acres of undeveloped property just off Interstate 75 on Sumter Boulevard.

Both of those tracts would likely hold medical centers, although there are currently no formal development plans.