

# UChicago Medicine to expand in Indiana

By Lisa Schencker

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One of Chicago's most prominent hospital systems, University of Chicago Medicine, is hoping to expand further into northwest Indiana, with plans for a 116,000-square-foot medical facility that will include a so-called micro-hospital.

The planned facility, in Crown Point, comes as the area experiences population growth, including people leaving Illinois to escape higher taxes and costs of living. It also comes as other big-name Chicago hospitals continue to expand beyond the city in hopes of attracting more patients.

The facility is slated to include a cancer center, medical offices staffed by specialists, outpatient surgery, imaging, infusions, lab services and the micro-hospital. The

micro-hospital would have an emergency department and eight to 12 beds for patients who need care overnight for short periods of time, such as a couple of days, said Audre Bagnall, executive vice president for business development and chief strategy officer at UChicago Medicine. Northwest Indiana already has a number of traditional hospitals, but UChicago Medicine believes its new facility can fill a gap by serving those who may now leave northwest Indiana for certain services. About 15% of northwest Indiana residents travel outside that region for health care, according to UChicago Medicine. About 1 in 5 of those patients go to UChicago Medicine locations.

"It would just be much more convenient for patients to stay locally and not have to go through

the process of coming to the city to be admitted for something that's relatively routine and easy to manage in the local setting," Bagnall said. UChicago Medicine spokesperson Lorna Wong said Tuesday she was not able to provide a cost for the project.

Micro-hospitals are a trend in health care across the country, as health systems deal with a shift away from overnight care in favor of outpatient care. Micro-hospitals have been slow, however, to gain traction in the Chicago area, possibly because there's already an abundance of hospitals here, said Mark Silberman, a partner at law firm Benesch in Chicago.

Mercyhealth is now constructing a micro-hospital in Crystal Lake, after a court battle that centered on objections from competing area hospital systems.

Mercyhealth has six hospitals in Illinois and Wisconsin and is not affiliated with the former Mercy Hospital & Medical Center in Chicago. UChicago Medicine's Indiana plan received approval from the Crown Point Board of Zoning Appeals on Monday, and now must go before Crown Point's City Council and Plan Commission, Bagnall said.

If the center gains all the necessary approvals, construction could begin early next year, and the center could open by the spring of 2023. UChicago Medicine already has smaller locations in Merrillville, Munster and Schererville.

UChicago Medicine includes University of Chicago Medical Center, Ingalls Memorial hospital in Harvey and has nearly 1,300 licensed beds.