

Banner Health eyes site for what could be Buckeye's first hospital

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Banner Health is planning Buckeye's first major medical campus, a site that could eventually include a hospital.

The proposal would give town residents their first major medical facilities, helping alleviate their current commute to neighboring West Valley cities. Buckeye has grown from about 8,500 residents in 2000 to nearly 40,000 now, but the demand for medical services has not kept pace with the population boom and the town still has no hospitals.

Bill Byron, director of public relations for Banner Health, said the company hopes to purchase land at Verrado Way and Interstate 10, by the new master-planned community Verrado. Banner Health will closely monitor Buckeye's growth to determine the phases of construction.

"The envisioned large hospital is really toward the end of the project," Byron said. "We would begin with a combination of ambulatory services and maybe a much smaller hospital. Then if the population continued to grow, it could evolve."

At build-out, Buckeye could have as many as 1.5 million to 2 million residents spread across more than 600 square miles, the town projects.

"If that many people are anticipated there and do populate that area, then they will need hospital services," Byron said.

Banner's site sits near the planned Buckeye Parkway Center, a 74-acre commercial project at I-10 and Verrado Way scheduled to open in 2008. Work on infrastructure for that center helped make the land Banner is considering a viable option, the company said.

Banner Health owns Banner Estrella Medical Center near the Loop 101 and Thomas Road in Phoenix, which draws residents from all over the Southwest Valley. In Goodyear, West Valley Hospital, owned by Abrazo Health Care, also serves the region.