

Planned Buckeye hospital could be open by summer 2010

by **Eric Graf** - Dec. 10, 2008 09:39 AM
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From the door to a doctor in 31 minutes - that's what the developers behind the Buckeye Regional Medical Center are promising the town.

Although that is an ambitious goal, what may be even more important to the town is that Buckeye will have its own hospital. The team behind Gilbert Hospital developed the recently announced Buckeye Regional Medical Center.

The hospital will be managed by Gilbert-based Visionary Health, according to Gilbert Hospital CEO David Wanger.

"There's over 40,000 people and no medical facility in the town," he said. "So in dealing with the town and the council, we've been met with a whole lot of enthusiasm."

In Gilbert, the hospital achieves its 31-minute promise 98 percent of the time, Wanger said, and the group plans to bring the same type of facility and treatment to Buckeye.

The hospital is scheduled to be on 20 acres near the southeastern corner of Miller and Broadway roads and will be surrounded by 120 acres of primarily health care-related businesses.

"A hospital like this is a real economic catalyst for the community and the surrounding area," said Mario Mangiamele, a planning consultant on the project. "A facility like this has a tendency to spur other development around it."

The hospital is planned to be a 24-hour, full-service, acute-care general hospital. At more than 50,000 square feet, the facility includes plans for 20 emergency room beds and 20 inpatient beds, according to documents submitted to the town.

The Town Council is expected to vote on the project Jan. 6.

Of the timeline, Wanger said, "If I had my druthers, we'd break ground in April, maybe May."

With a year planned for construction, the facility could be open by summer 2010, he said.

"It's a big step forward," said Sean Banda, a town associate planner. "It could be 18 to 20 miles to get to the West Valley Hospital (in Goodyear), depending upon where you live in Buckeye, so this is an important project."

Banda said the hospital and surrounding development would help the town get closer to its goal of financial sustainability by creating high-skill, high-wage jobs in Buckeye.

"The goal is to hire as many locals as possible," Mangiamele said.

The facility would likely bring in 300 jobs within the first year, as was the case at Gilbert Hospital, Wanger said. That facility is now at 460 employees two years into its operation and is planned to reach 800 employees total. A similar trajectory is planned for the Buckeye hospital.

Wanger and the Gilbert hospital group also are working on similar plans in Florence and Peoria, he said.

Elsewhere in Buckeye, Banner Health is looking to build a hospital near the Verrado community, but no timeline or plan has been released.