MTMC gets approval to grow, move to new site

Hospital aims for 2010 completion

By **SCOTT BRODEN**
Daily News Journal

MURFREESBORO — The biggest hospital in Rutherford County is about to get bigger at a new address.

A $278 million project to build a new 286-bed campus for Middle Tennessee Medical Center, operated by Nashville's Saint Thomas Health Services, won state approval on Wednesday. The project is due to be finished by 2010.

It will go up near North Thompson Lane.

The 600,000-square-foot modern campus will have 70 more beds than the 216 in use at the hospital's current location on North Highland Avenue near downtown. MTMC already is licensed for 286 beds but doesn't have room for them at its existing building.

"I think it will benefit the community," said Michele

pleased that Tennessee Health Services and Development Agency, which regulates the state's health-care industry, approved a certificate of need, allowing construction to go forward.

"We think our patients and their families and their visitors deserve better at this point in time," said Dr. Rick Michaelson, chief of staff at MTMC. The facility dates to 1927, when it opened as Rutherford Hospital.

The new location will be 600,000 square feet, up from the current site's 368,000 square feet. ■

NEW HOSPITAL SITE APPROVED

A new $278 million hospital has been approved to replace the existing Middle Tennessee Medical Center.

THE TENNESSEAN

MTMC replacement approved

Saint Thomas parent gives permission to build new hospital

By TODD PACK
Staff Writer

Saint Thomas Health Services' parent company says it can go ahead with plans to develop a replacement for Middle Tennessee Medical Center, its aging hospital in Murfreesboro.

Plans call for a $278 million, 286-bed facility that would be built on nearly 69 acres MTMC bought 3½ years ago in the city's Gateway area.

It will replace MTMC, which has about 200 beds and opened in 1927, although the hospital has been expanded many times over the years.

MTMC can't build the hospital without state permission. Gordon Ferguson, the hospital's president and chief executive officer, said it will apply for a certificate of need in July.

He wouldn't speculate on when construction may begin or when the replacement hospital would open.

Saint Thomas has talked about replacing MTMC for several years.

Last summer, MTMC hired the architectural firm of Gresham, Smith and Partners to design a replacement facility.

But hospital officials said Friday that Saint Thomas' parent company, Ascension Health, didn't sign off on the project until Thursday.

"Last year, when we presented this project to Ascension, they were encouraged, but they wanted to see how the Murfreesboro project fit in with the overall Nashville ministry," said Gordon Ferguson, MTMC's president and chief executive.

Ascension, based in St. Louis, is affiliated with the Catholic Church and is the nation's largest nonprofit health system. Saint Thomas, based in Nashville, operates Baptist and Saint Thomas hospitals in Nashville and Hickman Community Hospital in Centerville. It said in April that it had signed a letter of

Please see HOSPITAL, 3E

INSIDE
A look at Saint Thomas Health Services' plan for a new hospital.
On Page 3E

THE TENNESSEAN

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Hospital: Saint Thomas gets approval to replace aging Murfreesboro facility

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intent to sell DeKalb Hospital in Smithville.

MTMC is the largest hospital in Rutherford County, one of the fastest-growing counties in the country. That growth has taxed the facility, Ferguson said.

"We have right at 200 beds, and we're hoping to bring an additional 18 beds online around the end of this year because, for some time now, we have had some capacity issues," he said.

Rutherford County's only other hospital, StoneCrest Medical Center in Smyrna, also has faced capacity issues.

StoneCrest, which is owned by HCA Inc.'s TriStar Health System, opened with 75 beds and recently received a certificate of need from the state to add 26 more.

"There's been great growth in northern Rutherford County," said Neil Heatherly, StoneCrest's CEO.

It isn't unusual for hospitals to oppose a competitor's expansion plans, but Heathesly said he didn't know how he would respond to MTMC's application to the state because "I haven't actually seen the application. I don't know its scope or the timeframe."

HCA faces strong opposition from Saint Thomas and other area hospital operators to its plans to build a 56-bed hospital in Spring Hill in Maury County. That project is scheduled for a hearing before the state Health Services and Development Agency on July 26. ■

Todd Pack covers the business of health care. He can be reached at tpack@tennessean.com or 259-8075.

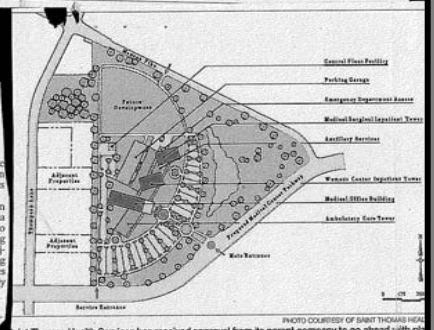

PHOTO COURTESY OF SAINT THOMAS HEA

Saint Thomas Health Services has received approval from its parent company to go ahead with pla develop a replacement for Middle Tennessee Medical Center in Murfreesboro.

Michelle Russell | OFFICE MANAGER

EDITORIAL

New hospital will change city's face, but planning crucial

When Middle Tennessee Medical Center opens a new hospital in 2010 on Thompson Lane in west Murfreesboro, it will change the face of the city's Gateway.

submitted photo

Middle Tennessee Medical Center held a groundbreaking ceremony Monday for its new physicians medical office building on Medical Center Parkway in Murfreesboro. Pictured are Monica Cintado; Ryan Simpson, vice president of operations, MTMC; Jennifer Garland, project director, MTMC; Gordon Ferguson, president and CEO, MTMC; Murfreesboro Vice Mayor Chris Bratcher; Dr. Richard Rogers; and Deeni Taylor, BremnerDuke.

MTMC brings vision to reality

Hospital breaks ground on new medical office

DNJ staff reports

A groundbreaking ceremony for the physicians medical office building was held Monday on Middle Tennessee Medical Center's new campus on Medical Center Parkway in Murfreesboro.

The complex, a four-story, 120,000-square-foot building, marks the first phase of construction for the hospital's new campus.

The completion date for the medical office building is set for summer of 2008. The anchor tenants are United Surgical Partners Inc. and Tennessee Orthopedic Alliance.

Gordon Ferguson, president and CEO, begin the ceremony

Chris Bratcher spoke during the program on behalf of the Murfreesboro City Council to show the city's support for the upcoming plans for the new MTMC campus.

BremnerDuke Healthcare Real Estate, developer and owner of the new office building, has been in existence for more than 20 years and serves hospitals and physician groups through planning, development, ownership and management of health care facilities.

"We are passionate about this project and knew that this day would come to fruition," said Deeni Taylor, executive vice president for BremnerDuke Healthcare Real Estate. "We are pleased to be working on this first piece of the Middle Tennessee Medical Center campus with such a great team."

Dr. Richard Rogers attended the ceremony to speak on behalf of Tennessee Or-

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Gordon Ferguson, president and CEO of Middle Tennessee Medical Center, speaks at Monday's groundbreaking ceremony.

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