

Work on new clinic could begin in 2018

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Groundbreaking for construction of a new medical clinic in Valley Springs is anticipated to take place next March, according to Dr. Randy Smart, Mark Twain Health Care District executive director.

The clinic has been on the health care district's project list for several years and has undergone a revision in size – being scaled back from a 19,000 – to a 10,000 – square- foot facility.

The state-of-the-art clinic will be situated on the southwest side of the intersection at State Route 26 and Vista Del Lago Drive taking up a small portion of the 14.4-acre parcel owned by the district.

One of the biggest challenges and the reason to re-evaluate the size of the clinic was “to make sure we had an operational plan,” Dr. Smart said.

Those challenges include predicting medical reimbursements in an ever-changing industry and what will happen between now and when the hospital's lease agreement with Dignity Health ends in 2019.

“Clearly, Valley Springs can support a new facility, but we didn't want some of it to sit empty,” Dr. Smart said in explaining the new plans.

Still, the new clinic will be nearly twice as large as the 5,200-square-foot unit the clinic uses on the opposite side of the intersection.

The new clinic will have space for five medical providers, while the existing office has 2.5 providers.

Construction of the clinic will be Phase 1 of development on the health care district property.

The district would like to find a partner to develop the remaining three to four acres of the phase 1 site into a senior living center.

“There is a huge need in Calaveras and the entire country for these types of facilities,” he added.

A specific site plan for phase 2 has not been developed or approved by the county.

However, it would be ideal if Phase 2 became a community center with several health-care related types of businesses, Dr. Smart said.

While the health care district would own the new clinic and run it with Mark Twain Medical Center resources, the remaining portions of the development could be leased out to other businesses to provide the district with a steady revenue stream, he said.

The cost of the new clinic is projected at \$5.4 million and the health care district is seeking an extension on a 3.7 percent, 30-year loan offered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development office.

"Preliminary indications are very positive (for the extension)," Dr. Smart said.

If all goes well and the groundbreaking occurs next March, the district's executive director believes doors to the new clinic will open in November of next year.

"The (health care district) board is very enthused and wants to see this project move forward," he said.