

MUSC to open Indian Land hospital in 2026

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Content

MUSC Health, which just opened a sports medicine and orthopedics clinic in BridgeMill, will add to its growing Lancaster County profile with an Indian Land hospital in the next two to three years.

The plan for the hospital has been in process since 2020, but was held up in legal battles with competing hospitals in the area. Those battles ended June 22 when Administrative Law Judge Shirley Robinson signed the order allowing MUSC Health to build a 98-bed acute hospital in Indian Land.

“We’ve had plans to build a hospital in that area for a few years now,” said MUSC Health — Lancaster CEO Scott Broome. “In South Carolina, you have to apply for what is called a certificate of need to build a hospital.”

The certificate of need (CON) is a process through the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) that aims to guide medical facilities on where to build, where public need is and where existing facilities already lie.

According to the CON, MUSC indicated that one of the goals for the hospital was to respond to changes in the distribution of people within Lancaster County; another was to stem the outmigration of county patients to North Carolina facilities.

In 2020, Lancaster County had 102,000 residents. According to the American Community Survey, census tracts 112.01, at the proposed project site, and 112.02, between MUSC’s existing and proposed hospitals, grew by 126.8% and 139.4%, respectively, between 2010 and 2018. Out of the county’s 14 census tracts, those two accounted for 35.5% of the county’s growth then.

Data in the CON application showed that out of nearly 11,000 general acute care hospital stays by county residents in 2019, more than 62% were in facilities outside the county, with more than 67% of obstetrics stays outside the county. Among patients in the Indian Land (29707) ZIP code, nearly 99% of those hospital stays and 100% of the OB services were obtained outside of Lancaster County.

MUSC plans to move 98 of its beds from its Lancaster hospital to the new Indian Land hospital, leaving 78 beds in Lancaster to keep pace with the county's shifting growth, and provide in-county care for Indian Land residents.

Legal battles

Broome said MUSC initially submitted its application to build the Indian Land hospital to the state on June 9, 2020. That application projected that construction would begin in May 2022, with the hospital opening by July 2024.

"We were notified later that year that that application was approved," Broome said. "And following that, that application was opposed by Tenet (Healthcare), which is the entity that owns the Piedmont hospital in Rock Hill and now the Fort Mill Medical Center."

Once a CON is opposed, the administrative courts become involved and take the case to a trial to hear both sides. At the trial, the administrative courts take testimonies from each side and review the information to make a decision.

According to the final order, on May 12, 2021, the parties agreed to a consent scheduling order, with a hearing date of Feb. 7, 2022. Then on Jan. 18, 2022, the court rescheduled the trial for July 11, 2022.

"It took from late 2020 to the summer of 2022 to get a trial date," Broome said. "We had a trial back in the summer of 2022, and we just received a decision within the last month that the administrative law judge upheld the initial decision, which was to approve the CON for the hospital."

MUSC has owned the 87 acres of land for the hospital on the east side of U.S. 521 since 2020, but it has been sitting vacant except for two signs signifying the "future home of MUSC." MUSC was not allowed to touch the land or make future plans until it had the final decision from the administrative law judge, leaving the plot to sit idle for the last three years.

Medical office building first

The Indian Land hospital project, which includes a 90,000-square-foot medical office building on the same site, is now gearing back up.

Broome said MUSC is in the process of designing the medical office building, which will have physician offices, primary care, imaging services (X-ray, mammograms, etc.), lab services and some specialist services.

"We're a few months away from being able to submit (plans) to the county," Broome said. He anticipates being able to break ground on the medical office building later this year, and expects it to open about a year later.

For the hospital, the process will be lengthier. As MUSC was not allowed to advance any of its plans from late 2020 until now, the old cost analyses of construction, initially expected to be \$235 million, and architectural designs are no longer accurate, due to inflation, and need to be reworked.

Broome said the original design firm, LS3P, will begin working on that soon, adding that it will take about a year to design. The construction will take about two years, assuming all goes to plan. That puts the hospital's opening date some time in 2026.

According to the CON, the hospital will be a four-story, 270,000-square-foot structure, including a 10,000-square-foot energy plant, with a 24/7 emergency department, general medical and surgical operating rooms (pediatrics, general surgery, urology, ENT and more), with obstetrics, radiology, cancer, cardiology and intensive care services.

Broome said the new Indian Land hospital, once open, will have no affect on the existing MUSC Lancaster hospital or its operations.

“We believe that the best care is provided locally, so (now) we can take care of Indian Land people that live in Indian Land without them having to travel elsewhere to get care,” Broome said. “We believe that’s better for them and their family.”

Child images

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