

**'We have to get it right': Inside UM Capital's soon-to-open Largo hospital — and what comes next**  
**By Sara Gilgore — Staff Reporter, Washington Business Journal**  
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As University of Maryland Capital Region Health prepares to open its new Prince George's County hospital, a process that's been in the works since 2014, CEO Nathaniel Richardson feels the anticipation — and the pressure.

The University of Maryland Medical System-owned health organization is putting the final touches on the facility at Largo Town Center ahead of its June 12 opening. So when he visited the hospital a few weeks ago and saw staff touring and training in the new space, Richardson had to “take a step back,” he said, “because it has been a long time coming.”

“That’s when I realized this is certainly real, and while there was a lot of excitement in that moment, that’s where you start to think, ‘Well, we’ve got to get to work now, because now we have to open up this brand-new hospital and we have to get it right,’” Richardson said in an interview.

The \$563 million hospital, called UM Capital Region Medical Center, is designed to replace the 75-year-old Prince George's Hospital Center in Cheverly and improve care for area residents — an intention the health system's leadership is hyperaware of, said Richardson, who's been in the saddle for just over a year.

“You have that excitement for the moment, and then the adrenaline kicks in stating that you’ve got to really move these programs forward and deliver on the promises that we made to Prince George's,” he said, “which is to transform health care.”

The new acute-care facility, at 901 Harry S. Truman Drive North in Largo, is about 600,000 square feet over 11 levels across. That includes an emergency department with 45 treatment bays; the UM Capital Heart & Vascular Institute with a dedicated cardiac intensive-care unit; a floor devoted to women's and infants' health, with a special care nursery and healing garden; a designated stroke center; behavioral health services, both inpatient and outpatient; expanded surgical services; orthopedics and more.

The space itself has all-private rooms for its 205 licensed beds, including 32 in its intensive care unit and 20 for observation. It has eight operating rooms, some specifically for cardiac and trauma procedures as well as an OR with in-room imaging capabilities. And it includes two endoscopy suites, two catheterization labs, an electrophysiology lab — and two rooftop helipads.

As a Level 2 trauma center, the hospital is equipped to handle more serious trauma cases such as head injuries and complex fractures. The building will also have a 15-bed specialty pediatric hospital operated by Baltimore-based Mt. Washington Pediatric Hospital.

The project included a \$500 million investment from the state and county. Construction started in January 2018 and continued through the coronavirus pandemic, completing in September 2020. Though, the organization opted to delay its opening from April to June as its team juggled Covid priorities. Clark Construction Group was general contractor; Estime Enterprises and Columbia Enterprises provided project and construction management services; and Wilmot Sanz was designer on the project.

Day 1 at the Largo campus will be exhilarating, Richardson said, “and it will be chaos.”

“This is a brand-new hospital, it has a lot of brand new technology,” he said: “I can assure you the plan that we have put together has covered most things, but there’s just going to be some things that we didn’t think of.”

That’s why the UM Capital team has put together a 24/7 command center with an on-call administrator and a couple of other staff members manning the phones. When things go wrong — a lab tube system doesn’t work properly, for instance — hospital employees can contact that line for support.

Until the hospital goes live, the organization is focused on making sure staff understand the new workspace, as well as technology, equipment and systems many have never used, Richardson said.

The 2,600-employee health system is not yet hiring up for its Largo hospital. But it does expect to, starting with administrative directors for new service lines such as cancer, neurosciences and women’s health, and then growing from there, Richardson said.

Adding those programs involves looking at the current clinical disease states most pressing to address within the county, including cardiovascular disease, cancer and obstetrical care for high-risk mothers. The system plans to begin developing those services in the next six to 18 months, Richardson said.

But with this beginning comes an end; UM Prince George’s Hospital Center in Cheverly will shut down after June 12. That hospital’s staff, many of whom have been there for decades, will move to the new Largo facility — a solemn moment, Richardson said, because “there’s a history here, there’s an attachment here emotionally.”

UM Capital is working with Prince George’s County, which owns the building and land at 3001 Hospital Drive in Cheverly, to decommission the old hospital building. The county is now figuring out what to do with that property.

UM Capital is simultaneously of transforming its Laurel campus at 7300 Van Dusen Road, a project that has broken ground. The former hospital will become an outpatient medical facility, expected to deliver sometime in 2022 or 2022 depending on any delays, Richardson said. The Laurel site’s transition started in early 2019 — though it was briefly recommissioned in March 2020 to take on Covid-19 patients — and is poised to further expand the nonprofit health system’s ambulatory footprint.

The health system already counts such sites at National Harbor, Suitland and Bowie, where clinical staff rotate. “And as those sites fill up with patients, then we hire additional physicians and determine if there are other access points in the county needed as the county grows,” Richardson said.