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## Jupiter Medical, UF Health plan hospital for Avenir community



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Jupiter Medical Center and UF Health plan to build a hospital in Palm Beach Garden's emerging Avenir community, an aggressive bid by both entities to capture new patient business in western sections of the county.

Jupiter Medical Center | UF Health Neighborhood Hospital at the Health Park at Avenir will feature 24-hour emergency services with eight ER beds, 20 in-patient beds, operating rooms, a diagnostic laboratory and imaging services.

The venture marks the second hospital planned by Jupiter Medical and UF Health in Palm Beach Gardens. Efforts are ongoing to create a research hospital on a 70-acre vacant parcel of land next to the Alton community on Donald Ross Road east of Interstate 95.

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The Avenir facility, known in the industry as a micro-hospital for its smaller-than-average number of hospital beds, will be built at the community's Town Center.

Avenir is a new housing community two miles west of the Beeline Highway and Northlake Boulevard. This former ranch, the last undeveloped land in the city of Palm Beach Gardens, will feature 3,900 new homes when completed.

Dr. Amit Rastogi, Jupiter Medical's president and chief executive, said Jupiter Medical had been eying a facility at Avenir for nearly two years, even before its newly-created alliance with UF Health this year.

But with the pandemic unexpectedly boosting residential growth, the need for a medical facility in the western part of the county made even more sense, he said.

Rastogi said Jupiter Medical is hoping to serve the 35,000 residents who live in housing communities in and around Northlake Boulevard, including Ibis and Bay Hill Estates.

At Avenir alone, there will be 9,000 additional residents when the project is built out, Rastogi said.

"We looked at the population growth, and we also looked at folks who don't have any access to health care for 15 miles," he said. "This is an area that would benefit from having a neighborhood hospital for ER care and access to admission if needed."

The new alliance with UF Health will also allow patients access to clinical trials and academic medicine.

In a statement, Dr. David R. Nelson, senior vice president for health affairs at UF and president of UF Health, called the neighborhood hospital "the perfect opportunity" to boost health care access in the region by bringing top doctors and the latest advances in facilities and technology to Palm Beach County residents.

UF Health has campuses in Gainesville, where the University of Florida is located, and Jacksonville. UF Health also has satellite facilities throughout Central Florida. The healthcare system has six health colleges, 10 research centers and institutes and 10 hospitals, including two teaching hospitals and five specialty hospitals.

## **Jupiter Medical's big growth plans**

The Avenir hospital comes as Jupiter Medical is working to dramatically expand its existing Jupiter campus on Military Trail. More inpatient beds, operating rooms and doctors offices all are in the works for the 242-bed hospital.

The hospital's expansion, Rastogi said, comes as officials noticed for the first time this year that demand for its service never abated during the summer.

Rastogi said the increased number of people who have families and are living and working full-time in Palm Beach County has changed its patient profile from mostly retirees during winter.

"The seasonality has gone away," Rastogi said.

Among the services in greater demand: obstetrics and surgeries.

## **Avenir hospital second planned facility**

The Avenir hospital is the second facility planned for the newly formed alliance between the state's flagship university and Palm Beach County's only independent, not-for-profit hospital.

UF Health and Jupiter recently confirmed plans to build a 50- to 80-bed research hospital in Palm Beach Gardens.

The facility would be built on 70 acres of prime land along Donald Ross Road once slated for 1.6 million square feet of biotech space by the former Scripps Research. In April, UF acquired Scripps's Florida holdings, including the valuable Palm Beach Gardens land.

Both UF Health and Jupiter Medical are eyeing Palm Beach County's recent rapid growth and the influx of new residents as opportunities for more growth. By collaborating, both medical systems gain, medical executives said.

While Jupiter Medical already has a sizable presence in northern Palm Beach County, partnering with UF Health gives the not-for-profit hospital greater access to treatments, physicians and investment at a time when other hospitals are muscling for patients in the county.

For UF Health, the alliance with Jupiter Medical gives the Gainesville-based giant an instant presence in the county and a new market for patient services.

"With the exponential population growth in Palm Beach County and surrounding areas comes the need for innovative and diverse health care offerings," Nelson said.

UF is in the midst of a university-wide effort to grow its presence in Palm Beach County, with plans afoot to open graduate programs in finance and technology in downtown West Palm Beach.

In addition to hospital services, the Health Park at Avenir also will include medical office space for primary care and specialty physicians. Pediatric doctors are being considered, too,

Rastogi said.

As Jupiter Medical sketches out two more hospitals, it continues efforts to grow its existing hospital campus.

Jupiter Medical is building a tower to add 100 more in-patient beds by 2024. In addition, the hospital's emergency department is adding 11 beds to its existing 32-bed unit.

And in 2023, a 90,000-square-foot surgical institute is slated to open with 16 operating rooms and two hybrid operating rooms, which can handle same-day surgery as well as more complex procedures.

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