

## Health Services Flooding Market

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### Medical providers have ridden the wave of growth into west county, expanding practices, hiring specialists and building new office space.

"We really couldn't imagine not being there," said Vanessa Aburn, vice president of strategic planning and business development for Anne Arundel Health System. "The growth is phenomenal."

A 60,000-square-foot Odenton Medical Office Building to house doctors from AAHS and Johns Hopkins will open this year — the latest in an onslaught of medical development in the county's western flanks. Baltimore Washington Medical Center has taken over an equally large building near Arundel Mills mall. Maryland Primary Care Physicians has expanded its practice, as has RightTime Medical Care. Patient First has its 14th Maryland location — and its second in west county — under construction in Odenton.

"When I last drove out there, I thought a lot of people who even live right near it don't know what's about to happen," Aburn said.

Expansion of the National Security Agency, creation of the U.S. Cyber Command and another wave of military realignment will usher in tens of thousands of more jobs to the area around Fort George G. Meade within the next five years. The wave follows another that began five years ago and already prompted a demand for medical services.

"We're very bullish on that area," said Don Buntz, CEO of Maryland Primary Care Physicians. "When you're in the primary care health care delivery business, like we are, you really want to go to where the people are."

Their three-doctor practice moved to updated digs near Arundel Mills three years ago, has hired new doctors when some retired and plans to hire more. Even providers who set up shop ahead of the influx have redrawn plans midstream. Baltimore Washington Medical Center moved its community education storefront from inside Arundel Mills mall in Hanover to a 60,000-square foot medical building across the street in 2009. Two primary care practices took some space, and the hospital started a women's center with two full-time and one part-time obstetrics and gynecology experts. The primary care practice has grown by 35 percent since then.

The rapidly growing women's practice prompted the hospital to temporarily shut down the community classroom to accommodate it. A nurse-midwife joined the practice shortly after it opened and plans include two more obstetricians by the summer.

"It's rare that you would double the size of a physician out-patient clinic in the first two years," said Kathy McCollum, senior vice president for business development and ambulatory services with BWMC.

"We knew women were having a really hard time even getting an appointment with a OB/GYN," she said. "We underestimated the demand out there."

The hospital has added a fleet of specialties to the satellite office, known as Baltimore Washington Health Associates, among them: urology, advanced radiology, orthopedics and a diabetes center.

Advocates who have spent the past six years selling the future of west county see the rush of medical services as delivery on a promise. "West county is the growth engine for Anne Arundel County," said Claire Louder, president & CEO of the West Anne Arundel County Chamber of Commerce. "This is where it's happening."

Already, she said more than 22,000 people have started work at or near Fort George G. Meade over the past five years as the Base Realignment and Closure process transferred workers to Anne Arundel County. Even though many may choose to commute from northern Virginia, it seems logical to Louder that medical services would follow the jobs.

Bob Leib, who oversees how BRAC will affect the Anne Arundel County government, points out that even though the most dramatic estimates of the influx have yet to be seen, those estimates came at a time when the economy was going gangbusters.

"At first you thought it was going to be this tsunami, but now it's more like the tide down at City Dock," Leib said. "It goes in, goes out."

The pace has been enough for local providers to invest in medical equipment and staff to serve the area. About 30 percent of the medical market in west county drives into Anne Arundel



*This 60,000-square-foot Odenton Medical Office Building set for completion this year is the latest in the boom of medical development in western Anne Arundel County. The collaboration between Anne Arundel Health System and Johns Hopkins will have primary care physicians and a spectrum of specialty services, adding to other expansions by BWMC in Hanover.*

Medical Center in Annapolis for services, Aburn said. The expansion will serve those existing residents, too.

The collaboration between AAMC and Johns Hopkins will have primary care physicians and specialty services housed in the new Odenton building, which is rising from the ground across from the Odenton Shopping Center. Like the BWMC facility, the new Odenton Medical Office Building will have a fleet of specialists: orthopedics, physical therapy, medical oncology, a women's program, women's urology and possibly an eye institute.

"That's our front door," Aburn said. "And we want our front door to be conveniently located."

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