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New IU Health Medical Offices unveiled

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MICHIGAN CITY — Some people will have lab tests, while others will have physical or occupational therapy. Some will see their cardiologists, while others might see their orthopedic surgeons.

Meanwhile, a different crowd might be strolling along a nature trail or eating a low-fat high-fiber meal at a nearby restaurant, and perhaps chatting with guests from a nearby hotel seeking directions to Lake Michigan.

That's the long-range vision G. Thor Thordarson, president and chief executive officer of IU Health La Porte Hospital, sees when he looks at the new IU Health Medical Offices at Life Works Business Park.

Working in a joint venture with Holladay Properties of South Bend, Thordarson said IU Health hopes to create a whole lifestyle park that will include a variety of retail and hospitality establishments, as well as professional offices.

"Holladay is working on developing the rest of the 44 acres," Thordarson said.

The 38,000 square-foot medical building is spacious enough for its present use. Chuckling, Neil Mangus, IU Health La Porte Hospital communication director, said, "We probably won't be needing all 44 acres for health care."

In a week or so, however, construction crews will clear a road to the south, which will make it easier for others to locate their offices or stores in the business park.

Just south of County Road 400 North near the Interstate 94 exit to U.S. 421, the new medical center is just the beginning of what Thordarson believes will serve as the gateway to Michigan City.

"It's the first thing people will see when they get off 94," he added.

Thordarson and other members of his staff introduced the new facility to members of the press during a tour Wednesday afternoon.

The therapy pool in physical therapy/rehabilitation facility is a bit of a star. Frank Aerts, director of physical therapy, was happy to demonstrate several of the pool's wonders, including the one that raises the floor and turns it into an in-water treadmill. Another feature involves resistance swimming or walking.

Underwater cameras allow therapists to watch the patient's gait and other movements, and make suggestions or adjustments for healthier and more efficient movement.

"This is the same pool the University of Notre Dame football players use," Thordarson said.

In another department, Dennis Gumbert, director of diagnostic imaging and women's imaging, was just as proud of his open MRI made by Hitachi. Patients who suffer from claustrophobia will find the whole MRI process much more comfortable, he said, because it truly is open.