

# Hackensack University Medical Center scores victory in Westwood hospital fight

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State health department staff recommended the opening of a 128-bed hospital in Westwood, granting Hackensack University Medical Center a major victory in Bergen County's epic healthcare battle.

The recommendation to reopen a scaled down version of Pascack Valley Hospital will be reviewed by the State Health Planning Board, which is scheduled to meet Tuesday. Health Commissioner Mary O'Dowd will make the final call.

HUMC North, as it will be known, "would not adversely impact other hospitals in Bergen County nor detract from the healthcare delivery in Bergen County," staff concluded in a report scheduled to be released later today. "Its implementation will strengthen health care resources and improve access in the Pascack Valley Hospital core area," the state concluded.

Hackensack President Robert C. Garrett said the recommendations "are evidence that Hackensack UMC's position as represented in our Certificate of Need has now been validated by the Department of Health Staff. We are obviously very pleased with the recommendation of approval."

"We are happy for the Pascack and Northern Valley communities as we take another step closer to making their long-awaited community hospital a reality," Garrett said.

The Valley Hospital in Ridgewood and Englewood Hospital and Medical Center have long opposed the plan, claiming the area already has a glut of beds and that adding capacity will harm existing hospitals.

While additional beds won't have a "significant negative impact" on existing hospitals, state health staff acknowledged there would be some impact. "Clearly, some patients will, in fact, choose to use the new facility rather than any other hospital in the county," the report concluded.

Hackensack will operate the facility with LHP Hospital Group, a for-profit company. The proposed \$40 million project would provide single-patient rooms. Hackensack already operates a satellite emergency facility at the Westwood campus.

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