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UP FRONT

Medical College of Wisconsin CEO updates central city initiatives

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Medical College of Wisconsin president and CEO Dr. John Raymond gave an update during a recent Milwaukee Business Journal Power Breakfast on his organization’s ambitious Center for Flourishing Lives proposal. The planned 100,000- to 150,000-square-foot facility on Milwaukee’s north side will house organizations endeavoring to improve the overall health and safety of central city residents. He also shared his thoughts on addressing central city health care issues.



SCOTT PAULUS
 Dr. John Raymond chatted with guests at the Power Breakfast.

About 330 guests attended the June 15 event at The Pfister Hotel in downtown Milwaukee. The following are excerpts from Raymond’s question-and-answer session with Business Journal editor-in-chief Mark Kass and health care reporter Rich Kirchen.

Can you give an update on the Center for Flourishing Lives initiative? Have you found a location?“Our board hasn’t approved the initiative yet so I don’t want to get over my skis. We hope to take a proposal to our board by December. We have not chosen a site yet. [Kevin Newell](#) from Royal Capital Group is helping us to refine our plan in partnership with the communities we hope to serve.”

What have you heard from those communities? Where would they like to see it and what would they like to see in it?“Every individual community wants to see it in their neighborhood, which is good — which means we’re onto something meaningful for the region. People want to see MCW step up. People realize that we have a lot of talent and people who are committed to the community.”

Have you adjusted that schedule at all? Were you hoping to have something approved sooner?“Initially we hoped to get something to our board (the week of June 18). When we started talking to the community, they said ‘You’re moving too quickly. Listen to us. Give us the time to tell you what we really need.’ So we listened and I still would like to do it by the end of the year. Yes, we have adjusted the time line slightly.”

Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele announced June 14 reaching agreements with the institutions at the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center to buy their real estate. What are your thoughts on that?“I’m very excited about it. The entities on the Milwaukee Regional Medical complex each have a number of leases on many different terms. This gives us the ability to chart our own course for the future and collectively to establish our own destiny.

“The purpose of the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center is to aggregate talent and education, research and social services space. And by purchasing those lands, we’re able to stay true to those missions.”

Does this help the Regional Medical Center consortium move forward with its master planning process for future development?“We are working collectively on the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center campus to work with issues like transportation access, better roads, pedestrian safety, rational parking and good relationships with our neighbors. I think it’s important to allow the MRMC to grow and to do that in partnership with our neighbors.”

There’s been a lot of coverage about Ascension Wisconsin and what’s going on with St. Joseph hospital in Milwaukee. What about the larger issue of the central city and how to provide health care?“I’m not going to speak specifically about Ascension because they are running a business and Catholic health is equally committed to the communities they serve. But you just can’t lose money in your overall enterprise.

“I think in order to solve some of the issues with the central city, all these organizations need to find a way to work together.

And I would cite the example of the Milwaukee Health Care Partnership with all the competing health systems. We work together with the federally qualified health care centers to try to provide preventive care and access to specialty care at a reasonable cost. Hopefully we can find ways to address the mental health crisis and health disparities in the central city.”

Froedtert and the Medical College recently opened a clinic next to the Bucks arena that serves the central city and downtown. But do you see a need for any additional clinical locations in the central city?“What I would say in general is that a lot of health care systems in the region are trying to make health care more accessible through surgical centers, clinics that are disbursed throughout the region and through a neighborhood hospital strategy which Froedtert recently announced. We’re trying to bring care closer to home for everybody and that would apply to the central city.

“MCW is not planning to have clinical care in the Center for Flourishing Lives because we have access to great services through Froedtert and Children’s Hospital facilities nearby.”

Is it possible you would open a neighborhood hospital in the central city?“MCW is a partner of Froedtert who is doing that. I don’t want to speak for Froedtert but certainly it’s possible. Froedtert has a deep commitment to serving the entire region in making the high-quality health care available to everyone.”

Rich Kirchen
Senior Reporter
Milwaukee Business Journal

