

Two hospitals to be big gain for Ontario

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It's still four years away, but the prospect of Ontario having two full-service hospitals is welcome indeed.

Ontario is already a booming city of 175,000, with expectations that its population will approach 300,000 by the time the New Model Colony is built out over the next couple of decades. Clearly, a city of that size needs a hospital. Two would be better.

Kaiser Permanente plans to open by early 2011 a 224-bed hospital on Vineyard Avenue just north of the 60 Freeway, where it now has medical offices and an ambulatory surgical center. That hospital will offer acute care, emergency services and a full spectrum of specialty care, according to Kaiser.

Also on the books is a 200-plus-bed private hospital on Haven Avenue south of the 10 Freeway. That hospital would be built by Pomona physician Dr. Jeerreddi Prasad as part of the Ontario Gateway development, whose final maps are in the approval process. Prasad sold his Ontario-based ProMed Health Services, an independent physician association, to Prospect Medical Holdings Inc. recently and now sits on Prospect's board.

Lack of access to health-care and hospital facilities has long been a complaint of Ontario residents. Mayor Paul Leon has advocated for a downtown health clinic, which has not happened yet, but DV Urgent Care has opened in the northwest part of the city. DV Urgent Care is operated in conjunction with the radiology department at San Antonio Community Hospital in Upland.

Dora Barilla, executive director of Healthy Ontario, a citywide initiative concerned with access to health care, called the new urgent-care center "the first step into health-care needs for the community." Barilla said Ontario needs accessible and affordable primary care, urgent care and clinics cooperating with one another, to reduce the over-reliance on emergency rooms to handle problems that should be treated in non-emergency facilities.

Healthy Ontario is working on a comprehensive strategic health-care plan that should be ready early next year, Barilla said.

There are and will be many health-care needs besides hospitals for Ontario's growing population. But it's great news for the community to have two hospitals on the way.