

# RRH creating new health center on East Ridge

By GINO FANELLI

**A**t North Goodman Street and East Ridge Road in Irondequoit stands the hollowed shell of a former Tops Friendly Market. Workers scurry in and out as the frigid December winds carry wisps of snow through the muddy parking lot.

If you've driven by this corner of town in the past year, you may have noticed a sign denoting something to do with Rochester Regional Health. You may also be wondering just what exactly is going on here. Wonder no more—the Tops market in Ridge Goodman Plaza, which RRH purchased last year, will be home to the Riedman Health Center; a state of the art ambulatory care facility. Covering 76,000 square feet, the two-story health facility will be home to many of the physicians and medical personnel currently working out of basement facilities on the Rochester General Hospital campus. Included are a dental practice, pediatrics, ophthalmology, phlebotomy, radiology and a full-service pharmacy. The new facility, which had a groundbreaking on Halloween 2016, is slated to open in July.

For Don Defrees, vice president of hospital operations at RRH, Riedman will fill a critical role in RRH's ability to provide care.

"The only way you can acquire more growth, and I can only talk on the real estate and construction side, is by bringing the care into the community where we serve our patients," Defrees said. "We're making it easier to access our patient care. And hopefully, (patients) can help us improve our market status, help us not to lose clinical services we're really good at."

Strengthening that reputation in the market, however, rarely comes cheap. The \$26 million Riedman project, which includes a 30,000-square-foot addition to the Tops building,



Trott

was funded by \$13.8 million in federal grants and another \$5 million donated by the Riedman Foundation, hence the namesake.

But that's almost pocket change compared to other endeavors RRH is undertaking.

For example, the Sands-Constellation Center for Critical Care has a staggering budget of \$253.6 million.



A rendering of what the former Top's Market will look like after its transformation into Rochester Regional Health's Riedman Health Center.

Funded partly by a \$20 million donation from Constellation Brands' CEO Robert Sands and the Sands Family Foundation, the seven-story, 312,000-square-foot facility broke ground on May 10. Another project, the expansion of Clifton Springs Hospital and Clinic, is valued at \$32 million.

Add to that a stream of acquisitions, including Rochester Urgent Care in Irondequoit, half of the practices held by Lifetime Health Group and conversion of the former Everest Institute, and RRH's investments quickly approach the economic stratosphere.

They are investments, however, that Jim Harrison, RRH's director of facility planning and construction, describes as integral to the future of both RRH and Rochester health care as a whole.

"We find as we buy some of the buildings, we can save on a balance sheet significant dollars," Harrison said. "An example would be the (nearby) Riedman Campus," which formerly was owned by HUB Properties, a Boston-based real estate investment trust. "We own the whole building, 305,000 square feet (and) we have 1,500 employees working there. We got out of lease spaces around the region and are now gathered for operational efficiency. All of our operations teams are together."

Not to be confused with the Riedman Health Center now under construction, Riedman Campus is a hub for RRH operations on Kings Highway in Irondequoit across from Bishop Kearney High School. That facility was purchased for \$9.5 million in 2011. The concept remains similar however; rather than leasing smaller spaces

and keeping clinical care separated, put them all in one place. The Riedman Health Center will employ about 150, but few will be actual new hires.

At its core, Harrison describes the arrangement as a convenience for patients.

"There's one primary care clinic, there's another at the end of this building (on the RGH campus), and there's a third for pediatrics," Harrison said. "So these are three clinics in three different areas with three different kinds of clients that we're combining into one space over at the Ridge Goodman plaza."

Although a bus stop exists adjacent to the plaza on Goodman, RRH has suggested adding a new bus loop to the facility to make access easier.

RRH did not just purchase the former Tops building; it acquired the whole plaza. Most of the businesses

Defrees said. "What's really special is everyone we're hiring on this project is local."

It all circles back to Harrison and Defrees's original sentiment: that all of the investment is carried out with the ultimate goal of providing the best care possible for patients who use RRH's services.

"We're moving out of a leased space that we're paying \$100,000 a year for and into a space we actually own," Defrees said. "We will occupy and really invest money into that plaza that has a return, meaning the good care of our patients. That's what really excites me, when we can advance the care we provide to our patients."

For Harrison, it's the repurposing of a long-standing retail part of the community for the benefit of Rochester health care that drives him.

"From a real estate point of view and

"As designers, we are continuously on the lookout for reuse and sustainable design opportunities. To transform a vacant building into a needed health care facility to serve our community is extremely rewarding,"

—Michelle Trott, AIA, a Principal with CPL, the architect of record for the Riedman Health Center project

there, including Chipotle, Starbucks and Marshalls, have long-term leases and will not be affected by the acquisition. There are now three vacancies in the plaza.

"What's really good is that, though we're not in the commercial real estate business, the rent that these places pay really helps with the operational cost and helps us maintain that site,"

a resource utilization stance, repurposing a building like this is pretty awesome," Harrison said. "Anyone can do greenfield construction and build a building out of the ground, but to take a building like this and to repurpose it for something, it's just pretty darn good. It's a real transformation."

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