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Remarks to the New Jersey Department of Health In Support of Valley Hospital
Relocation and Construction

I am a Ridgewood resident and a retired professional health services planner with extensive experience in the planning of hospitals, outpatient, public health and licensed health services. I am not professionally engaged with The Valley Hospital.

Background and a Bit of History

The Valley Hospital was an idea that originated locally in 1925. Owing to the intervention of the Great Depression and World War II the hospital did not open on its current site of approximately nine acres until 1951. Its existence was then the culmination of over 12,000 households contributing to support the hospital project. At the time of its opening there were 111 beds of which 14 were private, 29 were semiprivate, there were nine wards of four persons each, two isolation units and one quiet room.

In 1950 the population of Bergen County was slightly over 539,000 people of which a bit more than 40,000 were over 65 years of age. The Bergen County population in 2016 is estimated to have increased by 400,000 to over 939,000 people with a median age of 41.7. It is estimated that over 146,000 are over 65 years of age and their number is increasing. It is well-known that after 50 years of age the need for health services by a population escalates. The Valley hospital's current services respond to the needs of this population.

Evolution of the Need for a New Hospital

From 1951 to the present, and certainly going forward, the world has experienced a tremendous revolution in the advancement of medical technology, particularly for diagnostic imaging, radiation therapy, laboratory services and pharmacy. Valley provides these advances. The number of people now employed in The Valley Hospital laboratory exceeds the total employment in place at the time the hospital opened.

Radiology is the well-known example of the tremendous advances for diagnostic work provided by Valley's CT scanning, MRI, and PET services. Cancer services have been developed at Valley to include radiation therapy, surgery including robotic surgery, and a broad variety of chemotherapy interventions. At Valley an entire building, the Luckow Pavilion, has been built to provide outpatient cancer services.

Cardiac services now include surgery and extensive outpatient services. Pharmaceutical advances have resulted in an extensive pharmacy at Valley for both inpatients and outpatients.

In addition to these core services Valley has acted to provide participation with a broad variety of services such as clinical trials, child and adult epilepsy services, home care, the development of a full-time medical group, child development services including those for autism and Down syndrome, health and wellness and family education services.

Reasons for a New Hospital Building

It is very important to remember that most new technology is both labor-intensive requiring additional specialized staffing, and capital-intensive requiring significant hospital renovations and additional space in order to put it into place. Although the hospital has both renovated and replaced certain of its physical plant in order to stay current with the medical world it is now increasingly difficult to respond to new technology and the addition of services at the hospital's current location. Some of the existing physical plant, such as many of the two bedded patient rooms are at the end of their technical life and are too small to efficiently accommodate the required patient serving technology. Patients and the staff are crowded as the addition of new technology for gases and electronic services provided at each bed limits movement and almost eliminates visitors. Access to the existing emergency department entrance is small and crowded and does not provide for the easy access by vehicles and their parking.

Plans to expand the hospital at its current location with renovations and new construction as required to provide significantly expanded contemporary medical technology and its related staffing were not successful as they competed with other needs and preferences of the village's population.

Although still an important community hospital Valley is also a significant and sophisticated regional medical system. The decision was made to build a new hospital to serve Valley's existing service area. The proposed site of 29 acres is located in a generally light industrial area and is conveniently removed from, but easily accessible by a residential population. The new building is planned to be among the most contemporary of "green" construction and operating efficiency. The number of inpatient beds planned to be located there will be less than the current licensed complement as the hospital responds to the tremendous recent expansion of outpatient services. The size of the site is sufficient to accommodate other expansions that may be required in the future, including access to fire, police, emergency and logistical services. Ample space is easily available for parking for private, public and semi-public transportation. The dual demands of additional services and their requirement for additional staffing, and the anticipated access by an increasing and aging population of inpatients and outpatients will be more easily accommodated.

For these reasons I encourage your approval of the Valley Hospital Certificate of Need application.