

Master Planning: Community Engagement Session Notes

Date: June 11, 2025

Location: Bayfield Community Centre

Introduction

This summary reflects what we heard directly from community members, hospital staff, and local partners about what is working, what is not, and what needs to change regarding healthcare in the regions served by Alexandra Marine and General Hospital (AMGH) and South Huron Hospital (SHH).

While many of the comments focused on healthcare needs like upgrading our Emergency Departments, bringing in more physicians, and making care easier to access locally, the feedback also included important thoughts about how decisions are made, how the hospitals are working together through the Huron Health System partnership, and how leadership can be more transparent and responsive.

1. Infrastructure Needs

Care Close to Home: A shared community sentiment emphasized the desire for services to be accessible locally, reducing the burden of travel for essential healthcare. Additionally, participants stressed the importance of thinking beyond Huron County, recognizing that many patients come from neighbouring municipalities.

Emergency Department Expansion: Community members and former staff identified the need to expand the Emergency Department at SHH to improve patient privacy, increase treatment capacity, and enhance efficiency. A dedicated safe room was also suggested to ensure the safety of staff and patients during high-risk situations.

Diagnostic Imaging Upgrades: There is a pressing need to expand diagnostic imaging facilities to accommodate a CT scanner at SHH, which is essential for timely and accurate diagnoses.

Strategic Infrastructure Planning: In addition to identifying immediate needs, community members emphasized the importance of taking a data-informed approach to infrastructure planning. They requested a clearer understanding of the current conditions of our hospital buildings and systems.

2. Workforce and Resource Allocation

Physician Recruitment: Expanding the workforce is a top priority, with an emphasis on recruiting more physicians to address current shortages and enhance hospital services.

Utilization of Nurse Practitioners: The integration of nurse practitioners into our Emergency Departments was proposed to alleviate the workload on physicians and improve patient care.

Preventive Care and Chronic Disease Management: There is a need for increased focus on preventive care and education to address chronic diseases such as cancer, Alzheimer's, and diabetes. Community members stressed the importance of teaching better health choices and preventive measures.

3. Organizational Leadership and Planning

Leadership Accountability: Concerns were raised about the current leadership's ability to deliver on key projects, with specific mention of delays in the CT project at SHH and dissatisfaction with communication and decision-making.

Clarity in Huron Health System Partnership: Community members requested greater transparency around the structure, financial arrangements, and roles within Huron Health System, especially how decisions are made and how resources are shared across sites.

Physician Involvement in Decision-Making: Physicians and staff members expressed frustration about limited involvement in the planning processes. They urged leadership to focus on immediate infrastructure priorities (such as the CT scanner and Emergency Department upgrades) over long-term master planning.

Master Plan Development and Community Voice: Community members requested transparency and community inclusion in developing each hospital's master plan. A suggestion was made to form a community committee to ensure diverse perspectives are considered in planning and prioritization.

Conclusion

Huron Health System's Common Board of Directors and President and CEO have listened closely and carefully considered the full spectrum of community concerns. We remain fully committed to ongoing transparency, collaboration, and taking decisive action that truly reflects the voices and needs of our communities.

We recognize and share the passion our communities have for their local hospitals. Our goal is not to reduce access to care, but to strengthen and sustain it. This report is part of an ongoing conversation, and we remain committed to working alongside our communities to ensure our hospitals remain strong and responsive to the needs of everyone in Huron County and the surrounding municipalities—now and in the future.