

MERCED SUN-STAR

Valley Children's Hospital to build \$73M facility in Madera

BY ERIK GALICIA
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Valley Children's Healthcare has announced plans to build a new 73,000-square-foot "Ambulatory Pavilion" on its main campus off Highway 41 in Madera County.

The healthcare nonprofit — which operates Valley Children's Hospital and other facilities across the San Joaquin Valley — says it's a \$73 million investment that will bring various medical services together into an outpatient center.

"Bringing key services together in one place builds on the coordinated care we already provide, helping make the experience even more seamless and convenient for families," Dr. Vinod Balasa, medical director of Valley Children's Cancer and Blood Disorders Center, said in a news release.

The pavilion will be built in the space north of the main hospital building and east of the Founder's Plaza administrative building, where Valley Children's has vast open land to accommodate its future growth.

The hospital campus has grown to more than 700 acres since Valley Children's moved there from Fresno in 1998. The organization owns hundreds of acres zoned for residential and mixed-use development that it has yet to announce plans for between Children's Boulevard and the southern edge of the Riverstone community.

South of Children's Boulevard, where Valley Children's is installing new roads, its open land is slated for new healthcare buildings but also commercial development. The hospital says a commercial operation is part of its long-term plan to finance children's medical treatment.

Valley Children's spokesperson Zara Arboleda told The Bee that the Ambulatory Pavilion

SEE HOSPITAL, 2A

High-speed rail CEO defends Merced station move

BY ERIK GALICIA
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In recent months, bullet train supporters from Merced have made it clear they oppose the California High-Speed Rail Authority's plan to pursue building a station outside the city's downtown area.

The rail authority has said the move to unincorporated county land off Highway 99 and Mission Avenue could save the train project \$1 billion. But some residents, business owners and advocates have framed the plan as a broken economic promise for downtown, where they expected a station previously planned to be the Central Valley's largest to spur new economic investment.

Rail authority CEO Ian Choudri says the move would be best for Merced and the state when considering available space



CRAIG KOHLRUSS

High-Speed Rail CEO Ian Choudri speaks during a meeting hosted by the Maddy Institute in front of an audience at the Kodiak Club at Chukchansi Park in Fresno on Wednesday, Nov. 5, 2025.

downtown, the impacts of construction and how much money the project currently has access to.

"It's not about broken promises," Choudri told The Fresno Bee on Wednesday. "We want

to have a smart discussion around what makes sense for the city."

High-speed rail planning has been a roller coaster for Merced since August, when a rail authority report included various

system expansion scenarios that did not include any Merced station in the initial segment. The report blindsided Merced officials and advocates, who have become regulars during the public comment period at the rail authority board meetings.

The rail authority in January proposed changing the Merced station location, which was long-planned for downtown but was never officially decided. The agency has yet to reveal where exactly around Highway 99 and Mission Avenue it wants to build. It also still has to convince state legislators to amend SB 198, a 2022 state law that requires Merced's station to be built downtown.

Although many in Merced remain skeptical of what will result from the station's re-planning, some local officials

SEE CEO, 2A



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An all-weather competition track appears to take shape on what will be a new sports complex being constructed in what was an empty lot behind the main campus of Clovis Community College on the northeast corner of Behymer and Willow in north Fresno on Wednesday, June 10, 2026.

Major sports complex coming to north Fresno neighborhood

BY HANA TILKSEW
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At a long-fallow corner lot in north Fresno, a construction site has popped up that will eventually become a new sports complex for Clovis Community College athletics and possibly community use.

For years, the corner held one of the few undeveloped large lots in the area bounded by Willow, Shepherd and International avenues. The site, near the northwest corner of Willow and Behymer avenues in north Fresno, now has signs of site preparation and initial construction.

The new development, which sits behind the community college's main campus, is planned as the Clovis Community College ISE Diamond L.I.F.E. Sports Complex, a mul-

ti-use facility broadly geared towards serving student athletes, though there are plans to open it to the public.

Plans to develop the complex were already underway in June 2022 when James Sewell became Clovis Community College's athletic director. In his tenure, he has seen athletes go without a dedicated space, he said.

"We don't have locker rooms. Our athletic training room is on the second floor of a building, so it's gonna really allow us to operate in a much more traditional sense like a college athletics department would," Sewell said.

Clovis Community College's website details the amenities that the new complex will feature, including a competition soccer field, an all-weather competition track, bleachers, a press box, and more. The com-

plex will be approximately 4075 square feet.

The sports complex was made possible in part by a \$500,000 donation from Jami Hamel De La Cerda, founder and CEO of Diamond Learning Center, Inc. The complex will be named after her sons Isaiah, Samuel, and Elijah.

The total budget for the complex is \$14.9 million. \$10.69 million will come from campus funding and \$3.5 million will come from a bond.

College students are not the only ones who stand to benefit. High school teams and local youth groups could also use the space, Sewell said.

"We want this to be a state championship level complex, so whether it's 3C2A state championships, high school, I mean we'd love to be able to host and to open up our campus as well," Sewell said.

Clovis Community College has 11 intercollegiate sports teams and nine of them compete off campus. The sports complex will allow student athletes on competitive teams to be at their home campus more consistently.

Sewell envisions the complex as a "nucleus" where student athletes can gather around locker rooms, team meeting rooms, and the like. "I know that they are all really excited to get the keys and to be in that complex," he said.

The construction site's groundbreaking occurred on Oct. 8. The college has not yet announced an official opening date, through construction is expected to finish by the end of this year. Occupancy is planned for spring 2027.

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