



Case for Support
March 27, 2013

Introduction

Rural small-town America has always stood for something. It's a place where you know your neighbors, and you watch out for each other. It's a place where people work together, volunteer together, socialize together, and feel like they belong.

Belonging to a community like this, away from the hustle and bustle of the city, sounds like a great idea. But what if you need health care? What if your child is running a fever and you don't know why, or your parent is diabetic and needs regular monitoring? What if you need to make a quick visit to the doctor's office during your lunch break? It's not convenient, practical or even safe to rely on medical care that's twenty or thirty miles away.

That's why Cassopolis Family Clinic is such an important part of the community. It has been the main primary care office in town since it was founded fifty years ago, and it's still the place where fourth and fifth generation patients come because they trust the people they know to provide the care they need. The Clinic is a bridge, connecting people who live here with quality healthcare.

The People We Serve

Cassopolis Family Clinic is staffed by physicians who are board-certified in family practice. This means they provide care for the entire family, including pediatrics, primary care and gynecology. Virtually any routine or preventive service can be accessed at the Clinic. In cases where more specialized care is needed, the Clinic physicians will make referrals to specialists.

"Family medicine" takes on an additional meaning in this community, because Cassopolis Family Clinic is literally like family to the people who live here. When a patient calls the office, they talk to Janice, not a voicemail system. When someone has a question for a nurse, they talk to Patty. Patients say, *"Relationships are developed here. Sometimes you need someone who knows your family history and knows you as a person. It's about building relationships and trust, and that has to be earned over time."*

The Cass Clinic serves approximately 7,500 patients annually with quality primary health care, drawing throughout Cass County as well as the greater Niles area. They serve patients with and without insurance, and offer reduced fees for patients who are uninsured. The Clinic is one of the few practices in the area that will accept Medicare and Medicaid patients. At its location in

Niles, the Clinic serves an additional 1,500 patients with obstetrical/gynecological and Maternal Infant Health services.

What Is Changing?

Buildings age just like people do. The current facility was built in 1960. Whether you're measuring in dog years, building years or people years, that's a long time! The current location in Cassopolis does not meet building codes. It is also not easily accessible for people with disabilities. The traffic has increased so much that it is now dangerous for neighborhood children, who literally play among the parked cars. Although the Clinic does not provide emergency services, it frequently summons one or more ambulances per day for sick or injured patients who need to get to a hospital. Emergency vehicles have great difficulty entering and leaving the parking lot due to traffic and the location of the emergency exit.

Not only is the building outdated, it is also extremely overcrowded. The physicians see approximately 7,500 patients in a building that was originally designed to serve only a fraction of that number. It is crammed to the point of discomfort, and there is literally not sufficient room for the number of patients who need to be served. Every single scheduled appointment slot is filled.

Keeping up with the demand is a challenge now. An even larger challenge looms as thousands of people will become eligible for Medicaid or will have access to affordable insurance under the Accountable Care Act. Unless additional capacity is created, these patients will have no where to go for services.

A professional architect has evaluated the Cassopolis Family Clinic building and deemed it so out of date that it is not worth expansion or renovation. The expense to expand or modernize would far exceed the cost to build a new facility.

Our Solution

Collaboration is hard-wired into the DNA of both the Clinic and the community. After all, it was the community that sold bonds back in the 50s to build the current building! The county administration has generously sold five acres of prime real estate adjacent to the library and the County Health Department for \$1 per acre. The land is only half a mile from the current building, so it is still extremely convenient for patients.

The Clinic has successfully secured a competitive Capital Development grant from the federal government (Health Resources and Services Administration (HSRA) to build a new 30,000 sq. ft. building that will expand healthcare access to the community. This grant will cover \$4.4 of the estimated \$6.4 million needed to build a new facility. That means more than 65% of the investment will come from outside the community, and can be leveraged by philanthropic dollars to complete the project.

The new clinic building will have a substantial impact on healthcare in the community.

- More capacity. The additional space will accommodate three additional physicians who can see an additional 4,000 patients per year. That's an increase of more than 50% over current patient capacity. It will also create 13 new jobs.
- Dental services. Cassopolis Family Clinic and the Cass/Van Buren District Health Department will collaborate to place four dental chairs in the new building, with room to expand to eight.
- Mental health services. In partnership with Woodlands Behavioral Healthcare Network, the new facility will support additional behavioral health staff that will be integrated with the patient care teams.
- Expanded patient services. The plans for the new building include an onsite pharmacy and drive-through window, as well as disease management coaching that will help people modify their lifestyle to mitigate illness symptoms and impact.

In addition to the \$6.4 million that will be spent on the project directly, it has also been estimated that this project will produce approximately \$1.6 million in additional economic impact to the area, through construction-related jobs, additional full-time jobs, and expenditures on construction materials and equipment.¹

Conclusion

Cassopolis Family Clinic fills many important roles in this community. They provide easy access to high-quality, affordable healthcare. They are an economic engine, employing more than fifty people in total. They are a crucial access point for advanced care. One patient says quite simply, *"If I can just get my loved one there, they'll know what to do."* That is a high compliment, and it speaks not only to the quality of the care but the compassion of the staff, and the trust that has been built up over fifty years of service.

Access to health care should not be limited to people who have a car and can drive whatever distance is needed. It shouldn't be limited to people who have private insurance. It should not be the sole prerogative of people who live in larger cities. Local, quality health care for the entire population is an essential need in a small town, just as it is anywhere else. Quality health care makes small town living more equitable, attractive and sustainable.

¹ Prepared by Capital Link with MIG, Inc. IMPLAN Software