

severe reduction planned for SEMC-Ottawa still leaves the C-02 region short 24 med/surg beds and 2 OB beds, and will place all ICU beds West of I-39 - leaving a gaping hole in access in LaSalle County.

Confusing things even further is the fact that SEMC recently received an "A" rating from Leapfrog Group - a leader in providing transparency around patient safety and quality metrics. This puts them in the same company as University of Chicago Medical Center, Rush University Medical Center, Northwestern Central DuPage, Elmhurst Hospital and Silver Cross Hospital, among others. In both 2022 and -23, Ottawa was designated as a "Top 100 Rural & Community Hospital in the Country" by The Chartis Center for Rural Health, the industry's most comprehensive and objective assessment of rural hospital performance. It was one of only 3 rural hospitals in Illinois to receive the distinction in 2023. SEMC-Ottawa's maternity unit is a Blue Cross Blue Shield Center of Distinction, proving it to be a high-quality department.

Since Ottawa was the first hospital OSF acquired in planning region C-02, there is no talk of the "I-80 corridor" in their agreement with our community. Rather, there is a lot of language around preserving Ottawa's history and creating a sustainable health care delivery system here in Ottawa. For example, OSF stated in that application that, ***"access for the Ottawa community will benefit by the OSF affiliation as there will be no decrease in service scope or levels of care currently provided. Rather, it's anticipated the affiliation will support an increased clinical program scope. OSF certifies that the affiliation will not result in restricting patient admissions and that Ottawa's admissions policies will not become more restrictive."***

An operational concern is the fact that OSF's plans will rely on regular transports and additional police presence – using tax payer funded resources that benefit a non-tax paying organization. 24 is the Average Daily Census at SEMC today in the med/surg unit (peak census is 36) and they have planned for only 12 med/surg beds in the new facility. The math speaks for itself in terms of transports and the additional burden that will be placed on Ottawa's ambulance services. And at any given time there are 4-6 police officers on patrol in Ottawa. Last year there were 67 calls to the hospital, which took 2-3 officers to respond to (1-3 hours per call). OSF plans to grow mental health services so those resources will be in even shorter supply.

Please vote against OSF's projects to demolish our hospital in Ottawa and replace it with a smaller facility that eliminates our ICU and OB units, and severely reduces our medical surgical unit to one of the smallest in the state. OSF's plans do not align with the growth in our area – both traditional residential and also through tourism as Heritage Harbor looks to build 300 vacation homes. OSF's plans also do not align with the promises they made to our community 12 short years ago – and the promises stated in their exemption application to the IHFSRB.

It is our hope that OSF takes the time to make a better plan for our hospital, one that is right-sized for our community's needs and honors the spirit of the partnership we entered into with their system and our local hospital.

Thank you,



Tim Geiger, Fire Chief
Grand Ridge Volunteer Fire Department