

# UPMC proceeds with closure of Sunbury hospital

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UPMC went ahead with the planned closure of its 63-bed hospital in Sunbury, Pa. on Tuesday, and the academic health system is now working to sell the campus.

Pittsburgh-based UPMC first announced it would shutter UPMC Susquehanna Sunbury in December, citing low utilization and its location in an over-bedded region.

"Our real estate team is looking to work with someone who can sustain a viable community service out of the campus," UPMC Susquehanna spokeswoman Amber Depew wrote in an email.

A spokeswoman for the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency told The Daily Item in Sunbury that the agency is assessing a number of sites to potentially use to treat COVID-19 patients, including closed medical facilities, although nothing has been finalized.

Depew did not say whether a potential buyer might reopen the facility to treat COVID-19 patients. She said UPMC continues to allocate its resources to ensure it provides needed care.

"No decisions have been made to use UPMC Sunbury," she said. "We will keep the community informed should we need to expand our facility capacity and provide additional locations for care."

The Sunbury hospital is currently empty, as its equipment has been redistributed throughout the system, Depew said.

Northumberland County, which includes Sunbury, has had eight positive COVID-19 cases and zero deaths, according to the state health department. Neighboring Dauphin County has had 67 cases and one death. Another neighboring county, Schuylkill, has had 54 cases. Overall, Pennsylvania has recorded about 7,000 COVID-19 cases and 90 deaths.

The Sunbury hospital offered inpatient, outpatient, emergency, medical and surgical care. The 6.4-acre campus includes several buildings across 20 parcels in Sunbury, a city of about 9,400 people roughly 150 miles northwest of Philadelphia.

UPMC Susquehanna bought the Sunbury hospital from for-profit Quorum Health Corp. in October 2017.

At the time, UPMC Susquehanna's president said the deal would benefit the operations, expansion and financial stability of the hospital.

UPMC has in recent weeks fielded criticism from its own physicians for continuing to perform elective procedures amid the COVID-19 outbreak. UPMC administrators said it's not always clinically safe to delay procedures, such as in the case of cancer care or heart valve replacements.