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Medical complex, senior living facility planned for Roberta

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By WAYNE CRENSHAW — wrenshaw@macon.com

CORRECTION: Earlier versions of this story contained an error. There are more than one full-time doctor in Roberta. Below is a corrected version.

Construction will begin soon on a facility expected to significantly improve medical services in Crawford County.

The \$5.2 million project in Roberta will include a 24,000-square-foot medical complex and a 25-unit senior assisted-living center. A groundbreaking ceremony is scheduled for Friday.

The medical complex will be named for Dr. Milford B. Hatcher, who helped found the Mercer University School of Medicine and championed rural medicine. His daughter Kathleen Hatcher Cook is one of the developers, along with Roberta attorney David Mincey III and Chris McIntyre, who is Cook's son-in-law.

Mincey said the complex initially will house Dr. Fred Gatton and local pharmacist Bobby Bell. Plans are to include a dentist and an optometrist, which Crawford County currently does not have. The developers also hope to lure a dialysis center, audiologist, physical therapist, podiatrist, pediatrician and an orthodontist, as well as other medical specialists.

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Above, Ardell Howard, left, watches as medical technologist Holly Anderson draws blood Wednesday in an examination room at Crawford Family Medicine in Roberta. Anderson has worked in the only doctor's office in Roberta since Dr. Fred Gatton opened it in 1996. Howard has been a patient there for about as long. GRANT BLANKENSHIP — gblankenship@macon.com [Buy Photo](#)

WM WATSON McCALLUM
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From Mercer Alumni,
 we wish the Bears
 a great football season!

"We are going to be able to bring in services that we never could have brought in for individual facilities," Mincey said.

He estimated the medical complex and senior living center together eventually will provide 40 to 50 jobs. He said he thinks it will be a catalyst for economic development by attracting more

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people to Roberta for medical services.

Cook said the project grew out of discussions she and Mincey had for years about what they could do to help boost the local economy. She said 83 percent of Crawford's employed residents travel outside the county to work.

"It's already been quite a boost for the economy," Cook said. "The whole community is extremely excited."

Roberta Mayor Becky Smith agreed that the project is significant for the community.

"It's going to have a great impact," Smith said. "We are very fortunate to be able to have someone in the community do this for us."

The facility will be located on a 15-acre tract at the corner of U.S. 80 and U.S. 341. The medical complex will take up about 2.5 acres, with the remainder for the senior living facility. Construction on the medical complex and senior living center is expected to take about seven months.

The senior living area will be operated by Insignia Senior Living, which operates facilities in 19 communities in Georgia, Florida and Puerto Rico, said Ramsey Jennings, the company's president. Assisted living centers are for seniors who can still take basic care of themselves, he said, but want the security of having staff on hand around the clock to provide help if the residents need it.

"We are very excited to be a part of this," Jennings said. "This is the best example of pride in a county and a desire to help a community that I have ever seen."

The senior living facility will be called Hydrangea Senior Living, named for the oak leaf hydrangea, which was discovered in Crawford County in 1774. Cook said plans include two additional phases to the senior living area, including a memory care facility for those suffering from dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

Mincey said he also hopes after-hours care eventually is offered at the medical complex.

The groundbreaking ceremony will be held at 10:30 a.m.

To contact writer Wayne Crenshaw, call 256-9725.

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