It used to be hard for East End residents to find high-level health care close to home. But in a dramatic shift, health care companies are now competing to open and expand facilities in once-underserved locations — and more are on the way.

The pandemic has ramped up demand for medical services, as the exodus from New York City turned the East End into more of a year-round community and residents sought out COVID-19 tests and treatments in droves.

However, that’s not the main reason for the scramble to open new practices in the Hamptons and on the North Fork, industry executives said. The region’s population of seniors, families and singles was on the rise long before the pandemic. That made it an appealing location first for Long Island-based Stony Brook Medicine and Northwell Health, and eventually for Manhattan-headquartered competitors NYU Langone Health and now Weill Cornell Medicine.

Most of the new practices were planned before the pandemic, industry executives say. New facilities that have opened recently or are due to open in roughly the next year or two include:

- Stony Brook Medicine’s 22,000-square-foot free-standing emergency room in East Hampton, due to open in late 2023, for which it has raised $38 million;
- Orthopedic practices in the Hamptons and on the North Fork;
- A facility offering primary and specialty care, including LGBTQ+ health care, in Mattituck;
- The new Edie Wind.

MEDICAL GROUPS EXPAND TO MEET NEEDS OF REGION’S GROWING POPULATION

Text excerpted from June 12, 2022 article by Maura Mcdermott

The East End has seen a significant increase in care for cancer, heart ailments and other conditions, though mental health care still “could be upgraded a notch,” said Duncan Darrow, founder and chairman of Fighting Chance, a nonprofit that provides free counseling, transportation and other resources to cancer patients. The group also has an office at the Phillips Family Cancer Center.

Among its clients was Michele Shenfeld, 74, a retired hospital administrator who lives in the Town of East Hampton. Shenfeld went to a Manhattan hospital to get treatment when she was diagnosed with lung cancer in 2018, but she received counseling locally at Fighting Chance.

Shenfeld said when she first began visiting the town in the 1980s, there was “a dearth of quality health care out here.” With Stony Brook making upgrades to Southampton Hospital and other health care systems taking over and expanding facilities and opening new ones, she said, that is changing. “I think they realize that so much of their patient population is out on the Island,” she said.

“All the eastern communities are completely inundated now with people who have moved out during the pandemic, and I can’t imagine the strain on the health care system that that is creating.”

— Kathy Quinn, a certified patient advocate who lives in Bellport