

COLUMBUS BUSINESS FIRST

EXCLUSIVE REPORTS

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OhioHealth plans Dublin hospital

President named; site finalized

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Business First

Cheryl Herbert doesn't try to minimize her enthusiasm for the leading role she will play to help OhioHealth build a hospital in Dublin.

"It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," she said of her newly created job as president of the hospital, which has yet to be named. "I'm extremely excited."

Herbert's appointment in March indicates OhioHealth is ready to move ahead with its long-discussed goal of building an inpatient hospital in Dublin, said Steve Garlock, OhioHealth's senior vice president of regional operations and system development.

The hospital would rise from a 77-acre tract at Avery Road and Route 33, which is land OhioHealth has owned for nearly 20 years. An OhioHealth health center and medical office building occupy part of the site that fronts Perimeter Loop Road.

"We've always felt Dublin will be the right place for an inpatient hospital," Garlock said, "but the market needed to mature and grow to support one. We are now convinced we have reached that point."

There is no timetable for the project, but Garlock said a realistic opening would be in "a couple years" at the earliest.

There also is no estimate of the size or cost of the project.

"The project is really in the early stages," Garlock said. "We don't have a specific plan yet. That's Cheryl's first job - develop a plan."

Herbert will also run the hospital when it opens, he said.

Hospital background

An administrator with OhioHealth since 1998, Herbert has served as chief executive of the 53-bed Morrow County Hospital in Mount Gilead since 2000.

Herbert said she will divide her time between the Dublin project and Morrow County Hospital until a successor for the Mount Gilead operation is selected this year.

A former nurse at St. Ann's and St. Anthony hospitals in Columbus, Herbert became an administrator in 1990 at the former MedCenter Hospital in Marion. She was president of that 162-bed facility when it merged with OhioHealth's Marion General Hospital in 1998.

After the merger, she was responsible for planning nearly \$30 million in construction projects as part of a consolidation at the Marion General campus.

Columbus-based OhioHealth.

She said the hospital enjoyed a \$1.1 million financial turnaround in her first year at the helm and became profitable. It posted net income of \$583,000 on operating revenue of \$24.55 million in 2003.

Emerging leader

Garlock said Herbert's construction planning experience in Marion and her tenure as CEO at Morrow County Hospital give her the skills to lead the Dublin hospital project.

"Cheryl has proven herself to be a tremendous hospital administrator," he said. "She is clearly an emerging leader in our organization."

OhioHealth is the largest hospital system in Central Ohio. It is the parent of Riverside Methodist, Grant and Doctors hospitals in Columbus and also operates a number of outpatient facilities in the area.

Riverside, the closest inpatient hospital to Dublin, is a 13-mile drive from where the Dublin facility would sit.

Dublin's population has risen to 36,300, an increase of 122 percent since 1990, according to census figures. City planners have estimated the population will reach more than 57,000 by 2040.

OhioHealth's site at Avery Road and Route 33 will also be well-positioned to serve the fast-growing Powell area in southern Delaware County.

Herbert said OhioHealth executives have started to evaluate planning proposals from several architectural firms for the Dublin hospital site.

They also plan to conduct focus groups and meet with community groups in the area.

"We'll go wherever we can," Herbert said, "to get face time with people to see what they would like us to do up there."

Breaking new ground

Herbert said it is unclear how the Perimeter Loop health center and medical office building would be incorporated into the design of a hospital.

Those operations were built within the last four years.

The health center provides urgent care, laboratory, medical imaging and physical rehabilitation services, as well as wellness and health education programs.

"As we work on the site plan," Herbert said, "we will make sure to integrate those services into whatever we do and in the best way for future access and expansion."

Garlock indicated OhioHealth may have some surprises planned in the design of the new hospital.

"We want to create a new model for health care out there," he said. "We want to break new ground on the way we deliver care inside that facility."

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