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Business

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OhioHealth plans Dublin hospital

Construction could begin this year, officials say

By Phil Porter and Jim Woods
THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

OhioHealth this week confirmed that it plans to build a hospital in Dublin.

Construction could begin by year's end, said Steve Garlock, OhioHealth's senior vice president of regional operations.

OhioHealth executives say planning continues and an opening date hasn't been set, but the president of the hospital has been named.

"OhioHealth is committed to building a community hospital in the city of Dublin," said Cheryl Herbert, who has been named to lead the hospital.

"We don't know how big it's going to be or how much it's going to cost."

Herbert said she hopes to hire an architectural firm for preliminary work on the project within six weeks and gather input from the community on the services that should be offered.

Emergency and maternity departments likely will be offered, she said.

It would be the first nonprofit hospital built in Franklin County since St. Ann's opened in Westerville in 1984. A small for-profit center, New Albany Surgical Hospital, specializing in orthopedics, opened in New Albany in December.

In 2000, David Blom, now chief executive of OhioHealth, said the company would build a \$30 million, 150-bed hospital in Dublin within five years.

Herbert said it's impossible to say if that statement will prove to be accurate.

OhioHealth, which operates Riverside Methodist and Doctors hospitals and Grant Medical Center, has owned a 70-acre tract of land west of Avery-Muirfield Drive and north of Rts. 33/161 for more than a decade. The company operates a 20-physician medical-office building and an urgent-care center on the site, with plans to offer MRI screening there in July.



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Cheryl Herbert will be president of the hospital, to be built on property in Dublin. The hospital likely will offer an emergency room and obstetrics services, she said.

Mount Carmel also owns 40 acres nearby. Its executives could not be reached for comment yesterday about their plans for the land.

OhioHealth said it decided to begin work on the hospital because of the rapid population growth in the area and 20 years of lobbying by Dublin officials.

"We're not only talking about serving

Dublin but also the western side of Hilliard, the Powell area and parts of Union County toward Marysville," Herbert said.

Dublin's population grew 92 percent between 1990 and 2000 to 31,392, according to census figures. Hilliard's population grew by 105 percent during the '90s

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to 24,230.

"There are a lot of people coming out this way," said Margery Amorose, director of the Dublin Chamber of Commerce. Some projections place Dublin's population at 57,000 in 2040.

Dublin city officials haven't yet received a formal proposal from OhioHealth.

"We'd love to have a hospital," said Frank Ciarochi, Dublin's deputy city manager and development director.

"This is part of being a total community providing full facilities and services to the community."

Riverside, the closest full-service hospital to Dublin, is 13 miles from the proposed site.

The proposal must be approved by the city's planning and zoning commission and the City Council.

Dublin does not offer property-tax abatements, said Michael Stevens, Dublin's director



of economic development. The city does, though, have a tax-increment-financing district in place for the OhioHealth property that would allow non-school property taxes to be used for infrastructure improvements.

The hospital's president was selected from among several in-house candidates for the job, Garlock said.

Since 2000, she has served as chief executive of the 53-bed Morrow County Hospital in Mount Gilead, also owned by OhioHealth.

She will divide her time between the Dublin and Morrow

County jobs for the next two months until a successor in Morrow County is found.

Herbert began her career as a nurse at the former St. Anthony's Hospital on Bryden Road in 1979 and became an administrator in 1994 at the former MedCenter Hospital in Marion. She was president of that 162-bed hospital when it merged with OhioHealth's Marion General Hospital in 1998.

She took the helm of Morrow County Hospital in 2000 and quickly caught the eye of OhioHealth for her leadership in engineering a \$1.1 million turnaround of the hospital in her first year on the job.

"I view it as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," Herbert said of the chance to build the Dublin hospital from scratch.

At Marion General and Morrow County, she oversaw multimillion-dollar construction projects, which also made her a prime candidate for the Dublin hospital, Garlock said.

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