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Hospital's design to foster healing

OhioHealth's plan for Dublin: Increase patient privacy, reduce costs and errors

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OhioHealth's planned Dublin hospital is on track to open in three years with a seemingly obvious purpose: To help people heal.

But hospital planners say that goal is taking shape in ways that go beyond medical science or the physician's art. Every aspect of the hospital is being designed to reduce errors and increase patient satisfaction, a concept called "environmental healing."

For example, all rooms will be private to reduce the chance of infection and increase patient comfort. Nursing stations will be decentralized so nurses can be closer to patients.

And the patients will get the best views.

"This is intended to be a unique facility in central Ohio in that we want it to be stress-reducing for people," said Cheryl Herbert, president of Dublin Development, the OhioHealth unit that's building the hospital. "We want to redefine the visitor experience."

OhioHealth said in 2000 that it intended to build a hospital on land it owns near Rt. 161 and Avery-Muirfield Drive. Herbert said that pending board and city approval, the hospital will break ground in the summer or fall and open with 100 beds in fall 2007.

The hospital will include an emergency department, an intensive-care unit, a maternity/obstetrics department and in-patient and outpatient surgical units. Heart patients from Dublin and the surrounding areas will continue to be referred to Riverside Methodist Hospital.

"We have no reason to duplicate (specialty) services," Herbert said.

The next step is to rezone the 86.3 acres for hospital use. The first of two rezoning hearings on the matter is set for Jan. 18 before Dublin City Council.

Herbert's goal is to create a space in which the outside blends with the inside to create a "healing environment." Karlsberger Cos., the project's lead architect, has hired Rosalyn Cama, a nationally recognized expert in hospital design, to help achieve that goal.

Cama is chairwoman of the Center for Health Design, a California-based organization that strives to transform health-care settings to speed healing.

"They're going to look at stress, staff satisfaction, patient satisfaction, ways to cut additional cost — things that might make the organization run smoother," Cama said.

"Once you understand those outcomes, you can translate them into specific design issues."

Herbert said forward-thinking design often includes lots of natural light, noise-reduction techniques and the use of different colors and textures.



Cama said other ideas that will be considered include making bathroom doors wider to accommodate caregivers, providing additional hand-washing stations and making rooms big enough so patients won't have to be moved if their level of care changes.

"One primary thing is to have the inside and outside meld together," Herbert said. "We want to bring nature in."

Research by the Center for Health Design shows it's about 5 percent more expensive to build a hospital this way. Herbert did not disclose the Dublin hospital's budget but said she thinks the extra cost will be made up in the long run.

Staff errors, for example, can be reduced by designing all patient rooms identically. That can have more than monetary benefits. In 1999, the Institute of Medicine reported that as many as 98,000 Americans die each year because of accidents in hospitals.

"If we spend on amenities, the community might think we're making too much money. But if we can make a difference to patients and their families, the financial gain might come," Cama said.

"People will heal faster, and you'll save money."

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