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\$42 million med center planned

Cancer-treatment building to anchor site near airport

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A cancer-treatment practice plans to invest \$42 million in an outpatient center near Port Columbus and is waiting only for the formation of a tax district to begin construction.

Mid Ohio Oncology/Hematology would become the anchor tenant in Airpointe, a 33-acre development planned by Plaza Properties along Cassady Avenue north of I-670. Mid Ohio would close the four treatment centers it currently operates.

Mid Ohio also would expand its services and boost employment from 108 to 210 within five years, said Glenn Balasky, Mid Ohio's executive director. "Our referral patterns are highly aligned with the three Mount Carmel (hospitals) and Grant Medical Center," Balasky said. "That's the reason we're looking where we are." Columbus City Council approved the abatement zone for Airpointe in December and must sign off on Mid Ohio's plans. But the state also must approve the community-reinvestment area and is expected to do so within a month, said James Schimmer, economic-development administrator for Columbus. Balasky said Mid Ohio has acquired 9 acres from Plaza Properties and plans to build up to 109,000 square feet of space on the site. Currently, Mid Ohio has about 35,000 square feet combined at its four locations.

Balasky said the extra room would be used in part to accommodate oncology radiation and more sophisticated patient imaging. In a similar move, Ohio State University Medical Center announced plans recently to build a \$50 million cancer clinic in Dublin.

"The number of cancer patients is expected to double by 2012," Balasky said. "Central Ohio is slightly above average in cancer-incidence rates."

Mid Ohio plans to take advantage of a 10-year, 50 percent abatement on real property. The site was cleared last month for a 12-year tax break, but only if new buildings are built using guidelines sensitive to the environment. Balasky said the company was too far along with its plans to change them.

Schimmer said that's OK.

Plaza Properties President Larry Ruben said Mid Ohio will help "anchor out our plans for what I would call a professional and office campus." Ruben said he's considering moving Plaza's headquarters to the site and is promoting retail strip-center space Plaza has created near there.

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