

BOOM TIME



Construction on OhioHealth's
Dublin Methodist Hospital

Fierce competition among the Big Four healthcare providers has sparked \$2 billion in new construction, including a fancy new hospital in Dublin and a major rehab at Children's. A guide to who's building what—and why.

Understanding the fine print of that new Medicare plan may be easier than keeping track of all the new healthcare projects underway in and around the city. It's as if you need a tour guide to point out who is building what where. Well, consider this your lucky day. Let's imagine we're in a helicopter riding over Franklin County, starting in the northwest corner.

First, you'll notice quickly that Dublin isn't a bad place to be if you're sick. See OhioHealth's Dublin Health Center just beyond the Children's Hospital Urgent Care Center off of Avery-Muirfield Drive? Now

look behind it, where you can see the bright yellow hardhats of workers inside. That's OhioHealth's newest facility: Dublin Methodist Hospital, a 94-room, full-service hospital, the first of its kind in Central Ohio in decades.

Let's head south along Rt. 315. Of course, there's Riverside Methodist Hospital, another OhioHealth property. No construction crews here anymore, but see how far west the campus has spread in just the past few years? There are the recent additions to the McConnell Heart Hospital and all those new buildings for

BY ALICE HOHL

prostate care, surgeon training, radiation and oncology.

Next stop is Ohio State University's hospital complex with the cranes puncturing the skyline. There's \$1 billion worth of new work going on, including two towers taller than 10 stories. The Richard M. Ross Heart Hospital opened just a couple of years ago, but plans call for putting two more stories on top of it.

We'll continue south, going over another Children's Hospital Urgent Care and

ey, such as that recent \$50 million donation from Nationwide—said to be the largest single charitable gift in Central Ohio history. Can you guess what the new name will be? Right, Nationwide Children's Hospital.

Time to head north, to Westerville and past Mount Carmel St. Ann's hospital. Notice that machine grading the soil at Cleveland Avenue and County Line Road? That's the site of one more Children's Hospital project: a \$3.4 million Sports

Medicine and Orthopedic Center geared for children who break their bones playing soccer, basketball or falling off their skateboards.

One last flyover, over to Rt. 23 and north into southern Delaware County. OhioHealth owns 105 acres about 10 miles north of Powell, and it's going to start building an outpatient center there next year. The idea is that perhaps one day it will be expanded into . . . another full-service hospital.

NO WONDER HOSPITAL OFFICIALS ARE OUT RAISING MONEY, SUCH AS THAT RECENT \$50 MILLION DONATION FROM NATIONWIDE—SAID TO BE THE LARGEST SINGLE CHARITABLE GIFT IN CENTRAL OHIO HISTORY. CAN YOU GUESS WHAT THE NEW NAME WILL BE? RIGHT, NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL.



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an OhioHealth dialysis center before we reach Mount Carmel West. Those nearby rundown houses soon will be gone to perk up the neighborhood while improving the look of the hospital. We also should mention that Mount Carmel is building four outpatient centers across the county, from New Albany to Grove City.

Now we'll turn east toward downtown, past the Statehouse and near the Main Library. That jumble of orange barrels and plywood barricades is the area around Grant Medical Center, which demolished the 16-story Baldwin tower in 2004 so it can now build a 125,000-square-foot surgical and heart facility with 18 operating rooms.

Continuing east, we see Children's Hospital and its familiar blue neon sign. Everything looks the same, but just wait a few months, when work starts on a three-story building and a new parking garage. In 2008, they'll start replacing the main hospital, plus doing a lot more. We're talking \$743 million in construction costs from now until 2013. No wonder hospital officials are out raising mon-



DAN TRITSCHERT

Renderings show Dublin Methodist Hospital's entrance and interior as they should look when the facility is completed in 2007. OPPOSITE: A cylindrical tower marks the entrance to Grant Medical Center's not-yet-completed surgical and heart hospital.



OhioHealth

The last steel beams were erected early this spring to give form to the \$130 million Dublin Methodist Hospital, which will offer an emergency room, labor and delivery services, operating rooms and intensive-care unit.

Other projects: The \$59 million surgical and heart hospital at Grant Medical Center with 18 new operating rooms; the Westerville Outpatient Center with urgent care, a laboratory, radiology, imaging and two medical office buildings; the Delaware Health Center on Rt. 23 in southern Delaware County that could be expanded to a full-service hospital.

OhioHealth also recently completed a Women's Imaging Center at Doctors Hospital (formerly Doctors West) on West Broad Street. What used to be called Doctors North in Victorian Village has morphed into a combined outpatient center (operated by OhioHealth) and a long-term acute-care facility (run by Select Specialty Hospitals of Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania). It's now called Victorian Village Health Center.

Total cost: \$257 million

Timeline: Most of the projects will be completed by 2007.

Gee-whiz factor: The 94-bed Dublin hospital will have all private rooms with views (some of courtyards and rooftop gardens). In addition to ICU patients being cared for by on-site staff, a remote camera and data system will provide backup monitoring by doctors and nurses at a separate facility.

Yes, there's a healthcare building boom going on in Central Ohio, adding about 2.8 million square feet of hospital, outpatient and office space and costing more than \$2 billion. More than 500 beds are projected to be added to the region's current count of 4,774. The additions, renovations and new buildings are happening mostly in the places you'd expect—in growing suburbs and on the existing campuses of large hospitals—and involve the area's Big Four healthcare players: OSU, OhioHealth, Mount Carmel and Children's.

Each is trying to retain and recruit market share, and all except Children's are bracing for the predicted onslaught of seniors who need tests, surgeries, pills and procedures. Middle-aged Baby Boomers are about to become officially Old, and at the same time, people are living longer. In short, there are going to be a lot more sick folks to tend to. In Ohio, patient admissions already are up from 119.9 per thousand people in 1999 to 128.7 per thousand in 2004, while beds per thousand residents are slightly down, from 3.0 to 2.9. In addition, Columbus was the only major Ohio city to gain population in recent years, even with its suburbs exploding. For example, Dublin's population nearly doubled between 1996 and 2006, according to the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, and census officials have named Delaware County as one of the fastest-growing counties in the nation.

The building boom is good news for patient convenience and choice. More facilities mean doctor appointments are closer to home, and the terrifying drive with a child in the middle of an asthma attack is shorter. It also means newer facilities, which include private rooms that resemble a hotel suite (with extras such as Internet access). "The consumer is king these days in many ways," says Mary Yost, vice president of public affairs at the Ohio Hospital Association. "We like exercising that kind of choice. It's not surprising that hospitals want to satisfy consumer desires just as other service providers do."

All about competition

The fuel igniting this boom is competition, and it all started in the mid 1990s. Back then, hospitals here and across the state couldn't just build a new outpatient clinic or a maternity ward if they felt like it. They needed to go before a regulatory board to justify any major expenditures—even the purchase of a new MRI. The board could deny permission if its members deemed the service, equipment or building unnecessary.

But in 1995, the Ohio legislature ended



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"The consumer is king these days in many ways."

—Mary Yost, vice president of public affairs at the Ohio Hospital Association

what was called the Certificate of Need process. That effectively turned healthcare over to the whims of the marketplace. Although hospitals are not-for-profits, they are fiercely competitive. It's about operating profitably—especially when private insurers and the federal government are looking for ways to cut payments to hospitals in times of rising costs. So hospitals are putting services in places where people with money and insurance live, and investing in cardiac care (cash cow) and not burn centers (revenue drain). That's why bright, shiny outpatient centers—with labs, X-rays, CT scans, mammography, operating rooms and urgent care for some emergencies—dot the landscape in the suburbs. It also explains, according to critics, OhioHealth's building a new hospital in Dublin and why the New Albany Surgical Hospital wasn't built in, say, Groveport.

In fact, the New Albany Surgical Hospital (NASH) is a good example of life after the end of the regulatory board. When 25 or so Central Ohio doctors announced their plan to build a private facility, the Big Four lobbied politicians since no law or

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