

## **State capital bill includes \$83.7 million for new psychiatric hospital in Cuyahoga County**

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Northeast Ohio would get a new, \$83.7 million psychiatric hospital under a capital-spending plan rolled out Monday in Columbus.

The new state facility was the biggest ticket item among dozens of local bricks-and-mortar projects tucked away in the \$1.3 billion spending blueprint.

The capital budget bill, known as House Bill 542, still must be approved by state lawmakers before they break for the summer. The 300-bed hospital would replace the antiquated state hospital off West 25th Street, Northcoast Behavioral Healthcare.

The 1920s-era hospital in Cleveland and a Northcoast facility in Northfield would close when the new one opens.

The state hospitals house primarily indigents and people sent by the courts.

Amy Cooper, a spokeswoman for the Ohio Department of Mental Health, said that although her agency recently closed two hospitals -- one near Dayton and the other in eastern Ohio -- a new hospital is needed in the Cleveland area.

William Denihan, executive director of the Cuyahoga County mental health board, said he favors combining the hospitals in a single Cleveland facility because "most of the consumers live in Cleveland."

In addition to the new hospital, Cuyahoga County residents would see \$48.7 million in tax dollars flow back to the area. The projects include \$3 million for Cleveland Museum of Art renovations, \$1.8 million for Gordon Square Art Center, \$1 million for the Rock and Rock Hall of Fame and Museum and \$500,000 for the Cleveland Institute of Art.

A pair of University Hospitals projects would get funded in the bill -- \$3 million toward building the \$250 million Ireland Cancer Center and \$1 million toward the Geauga Medical Center. Cleveland State University got \$4 million for the Rhodes Tower renovation and \$3.5 million for the Law Building renovation.

It is not clear yet where the new psychiatric hospital will be built, although a potential site identified in 2006 was state-owned property of the Warrensville Developmental Center in Highland Hills. At that time, local officials were pushing to locate a new hospital on Quincy Avenue on the East Side before shelving the idea to put it there.

Denihan said Monday he didn't know where a new facility would be built, but he still wants the hospital in Cleveland.

"I don't know if that door is closed or if it will open again," Denihan said.

State officials would say only that they are looking inside Cuyahoga County.

Cleveland Health Director Matt Carroll said a new hospital would help fill a shortage of psychiatric services in Cleveland.

"To have local resources, that would be a great benefit to the people here," he said.

Rep. Matthew Dolan, a Russell Township Republican and former House finance chairman who helped shepherd the Northeast Ohio projects, said capital bill projects were picked with an eye toward economic activity and development.

"A lot of these folks are going to be disappointed with what they got," he said. "But we have to be stewards of taxpayer dollars and make the wisest decisions that we can."

Still, Dolan acknowledged that some of the initiatives making the cut could be criticized as pork. "There are multiple definitions of what economic activity is," he said.

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