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Let's Dream Big

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Let's Dream Big : University of Dayton, Ohio

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FAIRGROUNDS TO FUTURE

Transforming for Tomorrow

Monday October 30, 2017

Let's Dream Big

By Eric F. Spina and Mary H. Boosalis

This op-ed by Mary H. Boosalis, president and CEO of Premier Health, and Eric F. Spina, president of the University of Dayton, appeared [online](#) in the *Dayton Daily News* on Oct. 30, 2017.

As we shape a vision for the revitalization of the former Montgomery County fairgrounds, we invite the community to join with us Thursday, Nov. 2, to imagine the possibilities.

Positive change in our community does not happen in a vacuum, nor does it happen overnight. We will kick off the multi-year revitalization effort by inviting ideas — and listening carefully. No decisions have been made about any particular redevelopment projects on the 38-acre parcel. We are starting with a blank canvas, are open to imaginative ideas, and want to foster a healthy, robust dialogue about what could be.

Imagine a vibrant pedestrian-friendly mixed-use development on the doorstep of downtown Dayton. Envision a place where inventive minds — faculty and staff, doctors and researchers, neighborhood residents and community leaders — can work, live and play. Visualize a place that sparks creativity, that echoes Dayton's inventive spirit throughout the ages.

Let's dream big — together. It's time to breathe new life into what's arguably the most desirable developable tract of land in the city, building on the momentum of downtown revitalization.

Our two institutions have a long history of collaboration, with an eye on revitalizing the southern edge of the city. In partnership with the City of Dayton, CityWide Development Corp. and County Corp., we worked together to rebuild housing in the Fairgrounds neighborhood, enabling home ownership to grow to 75 percent. In concert with community leaders and private developers, we helped attract new businesses, graduate student housing, bike lanes and decorative street lighting on Brown Street, which has emerged as one of the city's most successful redevelopments.

We also co-sponsor a healthcare symposium on community health and UD students gain experience in Premier's hospitals and clinics. It's a mutually beneficial partnership that speaks of the power of collaborative leadership in our community.

That's why community leaders are looking to us, as strong anchor institutions, to be good stewards of this land, to transform it for future generations.

That's a responsibility we take seriously and thoughtfully. We have partnered with *planning NEXT*, a master planning and urban design firm based in Columbus, Ohio, to help us develop an inclusive process that invites genuine participation and leads to a master plan. While our decisions will reflect the needs and values of our institutions, we want to create a vision that honors our commitment to the Dayton community that we serve.

What will success look like? We want to create a vibe — a sense of place that capitalizes on the innovative and entrepreneurial ethos of the city, university and health system. We will work collaboratively with *planning NEXT* and community stakeholders to design a vision for the property that advances the missions of Premier Health and UD, boosts the economic vitality of the city and adds to the stability and health of the surrounding neighborhoods.

Please join us at 6 p.m. Nov. 2, for a "Fairgrounds to Future" community conversation — an interactive workshop at the former fairgrounds that's open to the public. Please RSVP for the workshop at fairgroundstofuture.org. If you cannot attend, you may also share your ideas for the property at the same website.

We're committed to transforming this land for the future. Our shared future. It starts with imagining the possibilities.

— Mary H. Boosalis is president and CEO of Premier Health. Eric F. Spina is president of the University of Dayton.