

Beyond the norm

Challenging traditional healthcare interior design methods produces refreshing results



PHOTOS: INNER DESIGN STUDIO

REDEFINING HEALTHCARE DESIGN NORMS, THE LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY Medical Center in Murrieta, Calif. blends hospitality and healthcare design elements within a white-dominated color scheme to create a high-end facility.

The space was envisioned to be a bright, contemporary facility that looks more like an exclusive resort than a hospital. Realizing this vision and working within client demands meant using a predominantly soft white color scheme—a controversial move in healthcare design since white more easily shows wear and soiling than darker colors.

“When we sat down with Loma Linda leaders, they described a clean, white environment with a technologically advanced appearance that evoked the feeling of visiting a five-star hotel,” said Rebecca Donner, managing principal of Inner Design Studio and head designer for the Loma Linda project. “This was a new challenge for me as white is not commonly used in healthcare design since it requires greater maintenance.”

Not willing to compromise on the vision, LLUMC accepted the commitment of greater maintenance required to keep the facility looking pristine.

Creativity within boundaries

Faced with an uncommon color scheme, team members reconsidered many healthcare design principles and recreated products to meet the client’s requests.

“This project was all about being creative within boundaries,” said Donner. “Our goal was to fully meet client expectations while creating a durable, aesthetically pleasing design that complied with California’s strict healthcare design codes.”

The soft white color scheme made it more difficult to find readily available materials that met healthcare codes and could safely withstand regular bleach solution scrubs. In addition, white materials that were available from healthcare manufacturers did not work within the contemporary design concept. To overcome these issues, designers reinvented materials and products more commonly used in the hospitality industry.



Above: Loma Linda’s high-tech executive board room comfortably seats 22 and continues the facility’s innovative design. Left: Guests are welcomed by an impressive two-story lobby that has the look and feel of a luxury hotel.

For example, designers modified flooring that is commonly found in commercial kitchens for use in operating rooms. The outcome is a poured epoxy floor with an added antimicrobial agent that can resist regular operating room stains such as iodine. Additionally, designers used a white epoxy paint, which is normally used in less public areas such as operating rooms and bathrooms, to cover common-area interior walls. Not only does the paint color stay within the soft white color scheme, but it provides greater germ resistance and can withstand frequent bleach cleaning.

Experiencing the unexpected

Throughout the interior, dark wood features and natural light complement soft white design elements to create a timeless, high-end look.

“Since the hospital is surrounded by mountains, we crafted our design to enhance the natural light and capture the surrounding views,” said Donner. “We



Interior glass walls enhance outdoor views and let in natural light to complement the soft white color scheme.

also knew the lobby would be the most important area for presenting a wonderful first impression to incoming patients and family members. So we started there to make the facility seem as modern and contemporary as possible, while maintaining that feeling of warmth and luxury.”

The Loma Linda experience begins in the two-story main lobby. It features a custom espresso veneered paneled ceiling, white walls and a multi-colored pattern terrazzo floor, accented with espresso sofas and offset by spa blue and fabric upholstered cube club chairs and customized



Customized translucent panels and pendant lights adorn the labor and delivery room headwall.

lighting. Birch tree trunks divide the lobby into separate waiting areas to create more privacy.

Guests are greeted by a custom-built espresso veneered reception desk with a ‘Coke bottle green’ glass top. The main wall behind the reception desk features a 46-foot glass-like installation with LED lights that illuminate the motto of Loma Linda University, “To Make Man Whole.” An adjacent lobby wall of monolithic sculptured wavy wall surface was utilized to mimic water, creating a uniquely calming result, while also reducing the health hazards of using an actual waterscape that the client initially requested.

The patient floor waiting rooms (at the end of each corridor) feature interior glass walls and windows that emphasize outdoor views and natural light to complement the predominantly soft white color scheme.

With no detail unturned, hospital rooms emanate the same contemporary, luxurious feel. White walls are contrasted against dark espresso laminate cabinets and doors and are warmed by customized Italian light fixtures and translucent headwalls. Custom-built patient information boards and nurse stations complete each room.

“We continued the contrast of light against dark wood elements and emphasized outdoor views and natural light,” said Donner. “The patient rooms have custom furnishings, breathtaking views and an abundant amount of natural light, which gives the patient the ability to connect with the outdoors.”

In addition to thoughtfully designed patient spaces, a top priority for planners was to create an efficient layout that required fewer steps for caregivers, physicians and staff to carry out duties. Also, private physician lounges that have the feel of a country club locker room were created to provide separate physician sleeping quarters.

The executive boardroom is another contemporary space that continues the facility’s innovative design of white materials contrasted against dark wood elements. It accommodates large groups with 22 oversized, white polyester and urethane-upholstered chairs that surround a custom-built, espresso-stained quarter walnut table with ‘Coke bottle green’ glass edges rounding off each end.

Refreshing results

Loma Linda University Medical Center reflects an innovative approach to mixing healthcare and hospitality design elements to give patients a more elegantly comfortable experience than is typically found in healthcare facilities.

“As healthcare designers, it is easier to use conventional healthcare design elements,” said Donner. “Creating an inspiring, healing environment for patients should not fit any specific mold or standard. It’s okay to question healthcare design norms to go beyond what’s expected and more commonly used...the result is refreshing.”

PROJECT TEAM: Loma Linda University Medical Center — Murrieta

Architect: Davis Stokes Collaborative
Interior Design: Inner Design Studio
General Contractor: Layton Construction
Structural Engineer: Structural Affiliates International Inc.
Civil Engineer: Webb Associates
Mechanical Engineer: Entech
Electrical Engineer: Entech
Landscape Architect: Al Hamba Group

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