

Deep roots

Stamford Hospital seeks to revitalize its neighborhood by further integrating itself within the urban landscape

BY TUSHAR GUPTA AND KOMAL KOTWAL; RENDERINGS BY ©JMCSWAINSTUDIOS.COM

SITE PLAN BY DIRTWORKS, PC

Stamford Hospital has had a long and close association with the city of Stamford, located on the Connecticut coast just 25 miles north of New York City. The hospital serves a diverse population of 120,000-plus middle- and lower-income urban residents, including a high percentage of immigrants, as well as the more affluent communities of suburban North Stamford and nearby Darien. Its urban campus situated on the city's west side had become a part of the nearby residential neighborhood, with local residents even taking shortcuts across the grounds. After extensive due diligence revealed multiple space deficiencies (including undersized and inconvenient rooms) in the aging existing facilities, the hospital and Houston-based WHR Architects' medical planning team developed a master plan for growth that indicated a need for a 30-acre site. When the search for alternatives failed to identify a suitable site, the hospital decided to expand the current one with additional acreage to accommodate growth and renewal.

The building is anchored into the landscape with earthy materials such as stone and terra cotta, while the upper floors feature glass reflecting the hues of the sky and providing maximized views to patients and staff.



The hospital's main entrance is framed with a strong sense of identity, aiding wayfinding. Vehicles approach the extended white canopy, dropping off patients and visitors to a welcoming entrance space.



The hospital campus was designed to bring the community and hospital together. The layout connects the larger landscape, and ecological and socioeconomic communities.

“To expand in place, we needed to acquire not only individual homes in the neighborhood but city streets and the land supporting subsidized high-rise housing,” says David Smith, senior vice president, strategy and chief strategy officer at Stamford Hospital. “While we had always had strong ties to the city and the community, this effort really made us partners, and the hospital made it a priority to collaborate with our neighbors.” Smith adds that the mayor and city officials supported the hospital’s vision, “which helped us move through complex rezoning and approvals with remarkable speed.”

Among the hospital’s first efforts was the establishment of a partnership with Charter Oak Communities (formerly the Stamford Housing Authority), which involved a property exchange that will allow for the building of new affordable and workforce housing on an off-site property formerly owned by the hospital.

“Having secured sufficient acreage for expansion, we were able to look at the potential redevelopment of the campus and the surrounding community in a more holistic way,” says Kathleen A. Silard, RN, BSN, MS, FACHE, executive vice president, chief operating officer and chief nursing officer. “We had an opportunity not only to create a secure and healing environment at the hospital, but to extend it into the surrounding area, connecting the campus to the nearby parks and helping to create a health and wellness district as part of the revitalization of the west side.”

The “hospital between the parks” concept will create a greenbelt that extends out from the campus core in two directions, one connecting to Lione Park and the other to Whittaker Park and the Mill River. The sustainable site design incorporates shade trees, native landscaping, a rain garden and bioswales, pervious paving, green roofs and terraces, as well as storm water gardens that connect to the larger watershed. Bike and pedestrian paths will traverse the grounds and connect the

hospital to the surrounding neighborhoods.

“The campus itself is an arboretum,” says David Kamp, FASLA, LEF, NA, president of Dirtworks, the project’s landscape architects. “We made strategic choices with the plant materials to give definition to the spaces and provide wayfinding cues, from changes in the tree canopy and quality of the light to seasonal differences. Everything reinforces a sense of security and calm.” The landscape also contributes to the hospital’s goals of providing respite, access to a variety of outdoor spaces, and views to nature for patients, families, and staff.

At the heart of the campus, scheduled for completion in spring 2016, will be a new specialty healthcare building that incorporates the latest advancements in facility design and medical technology. The new emergency department (ED) more than doubles the number and size of exam rooms. In addition, the ED will include a separate cardiac section and dedicated trauma treatment rooms, a dedicated area for behavioral health, and a separate pediatric treatment area to serve the specific needs of children.

The new hospital wing incorporates the Heart & Vascular Institute’s centralized location for invasive and non-invasive heart services, surgical suites with 10 high-tech operating rooms, and an ICU expansion from 16 to 24 beds, emphasizing a commitment to critical care and tertiary services. The seven floors in the patient tower will feature all private rooms with decentralized nursing units (three for 36 beds) for more flexible delivery of patient care. All patient rooms will feature private baths and showers.

Stamford Hospital is a member of the Planetree group of hospitals, and the design of the new facility reflects its principles of supporting a calm, welcoming, and healing environment featuring natural light, efficient space design, and more effective noise control and wayfinding. At the same time, the entire facility was designed with the environ-



The exterior of the hospital is park-like at the pedestrian level. Areas of respite outside cater to children and the elderly, providing public spaces to relax.

ment in mind. Non-toxic, low-VOC materials; calming acoustics; and increased ventilation and filtration systems will increase environmental quality and infection control. Massing, reflection, lighting of the building, and landscape elements are designed to protect the livability of neighboring communities and native species.

The project is currently registered with the U.S. Green Building Council under the LEED rating system and is also incorporating a number of strategies from the *Green Guide for Health Care* as best

practices, such as outdoor places of respite for patients and visitors.

By stepping outside of the building envelope and considering the larger environment, Stamford Hospital has been able to influence change across the community, in the neighborhood, and at the hospital itself. **HCD**

Tushar Gupta, AIA, is principal at WHR Architects and lead designer for the Stamford Hospital expansion. Komal Kotwal, LEED AP BD+C, is the sustainable design leader for WHR and headed the sustainability effort for the Stamford project.