



Evaluating the design of an acute care hospital to inform strategic expansion

Sarasota Memorial Hospital – Venice
Post-Occupancy Report

Flad

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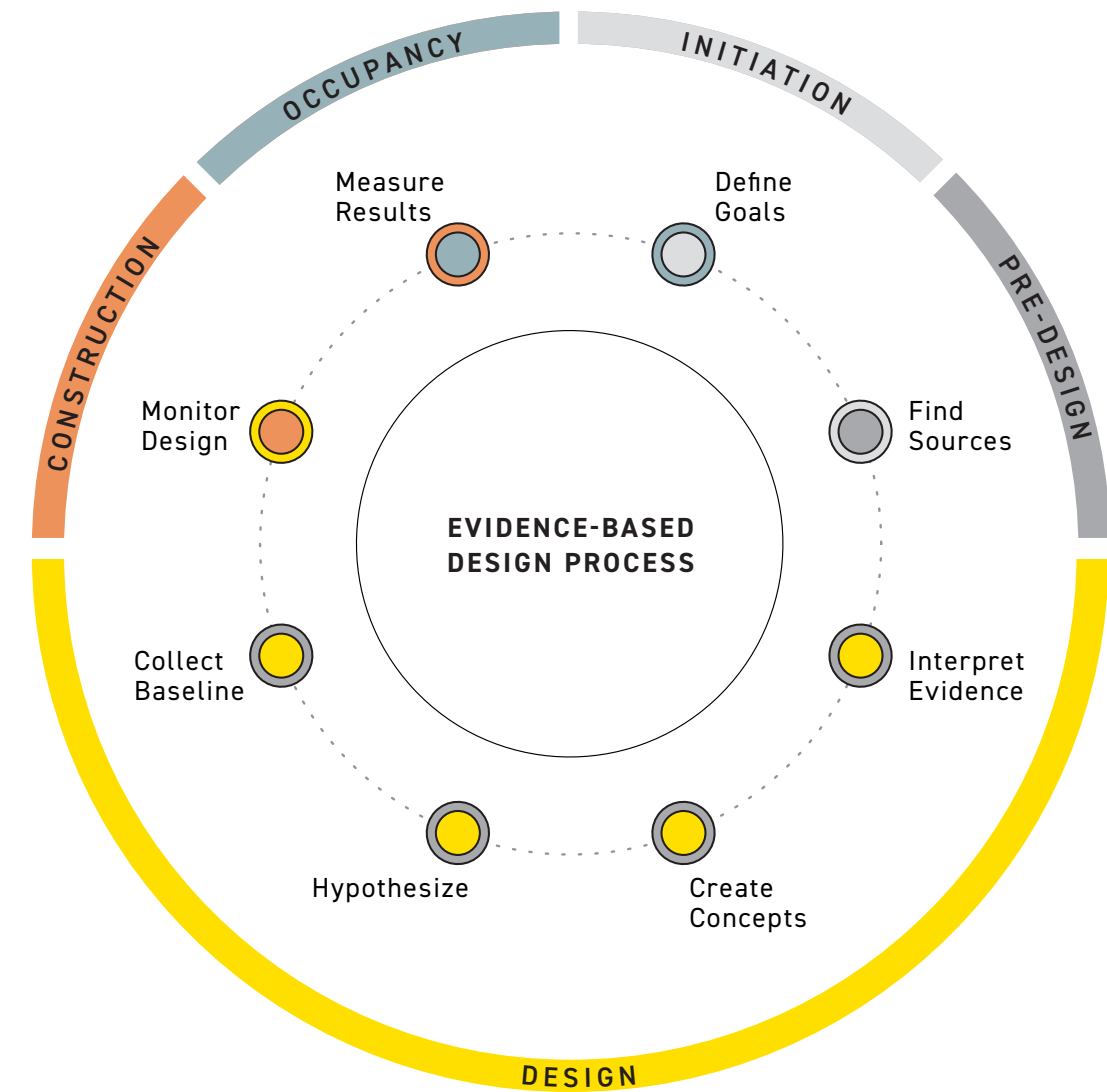
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our approach

Driven by a passion for continuous improvement, Flad employs an evidence-based design approach grounded in Lean principles to create environments that enhance human experience, improve efficiency, and achieve better clinical outcomes.

An important step in our approach is to conduct post-occupancy evaluations (POE) to rigorously analyze if design goals were met, detail opportunities for improvement, and apply learnings to future work. Post-occupancy insights are shared and applied across our practice, reinforcing Flad's dedication to continuous improvement.

The following is a comprehensive report of a POE of Sarasota Memorial Hospital-Venice. The POE was completed in two phases. After the hospital was completed in 2021, a POE was conducted (Phase 1), focusing on how the design supports community engagement, health and wellness, and resiliency. Following the completion of a bed tower expansion in 2024, another POE (Phase 2) was conducted with a focus on inpatient unit design.



The Center for Health Design. (2008).
EDAC study guide 1: An introduction to evidence-based design. Concord, CA.

the project

Sarasota Memorial Health Care System Sarasota Memorial Hospital-Venice

Seeking to bring top-ranked medical and emergency services closer to home for a growing community, Sarasota Memorial Health Care System (SMH) engaged Flad to master plan and design a new, greenfield hospital campus in Venice, Florida.

As a safety-net hospital, the design needed to support community health and engagement as well as the flexibility to accommodate changing needs and provide a resilient response to natural disasters and other unexpected events.

The resulting five-story, 452,000-square-foot design creates a welcoming and comfortable experience for patients, visitors, and staff guided by considerations for the entirety of the patient journey. With extensive use of high-performance glass on the building's exterior, interior spaces are filled with natural light and feature strong indoor-outdoor connections. Views to the landscaped campus, local artwork, and natural materials help create a unique atmosphere that inspires healing and hope for all.

Opening in 2021 with a full slate of medical and surgical care, the first phase featured 110 private patient suites, a 28-bed emergency care center, and eight surgical suites. A seamlessly connected, two-story medical office building provided direct access to complementary, outpatient services in a single-care setting.

SMH-Venice was master planned to expand to more than double its size, including three patient towers planned for the backside of the hospital, protecting the front door and patient experience from any future disruption.

As a testament to the quality of care offered and the need in the community, the hospital was at capacity within a week of opening. First expansion included a new bed tower with 102 beds as well as 33 new emergency care exam rooms to the existing 28-bed ECC.

Within a year of opening the Venice campus, SMH announced plans to open a new medical campus in North Port, bringing five-star, affordable care closer to south Sarasota County residents. One of the fastest growing cities in the nation, North Port is located 15 miles southeast of Venice and lacks significant medical infrastructure.

Flad was selected to master plan the North Port Campus, drawing from the success and lessons learned from the POEs conducted at SMH-Venice.

[Learn more >](#)

Venice, FL

Phase 1

Nov. 2021 Completion

452,000 SF

Phase 2

Bed Tower

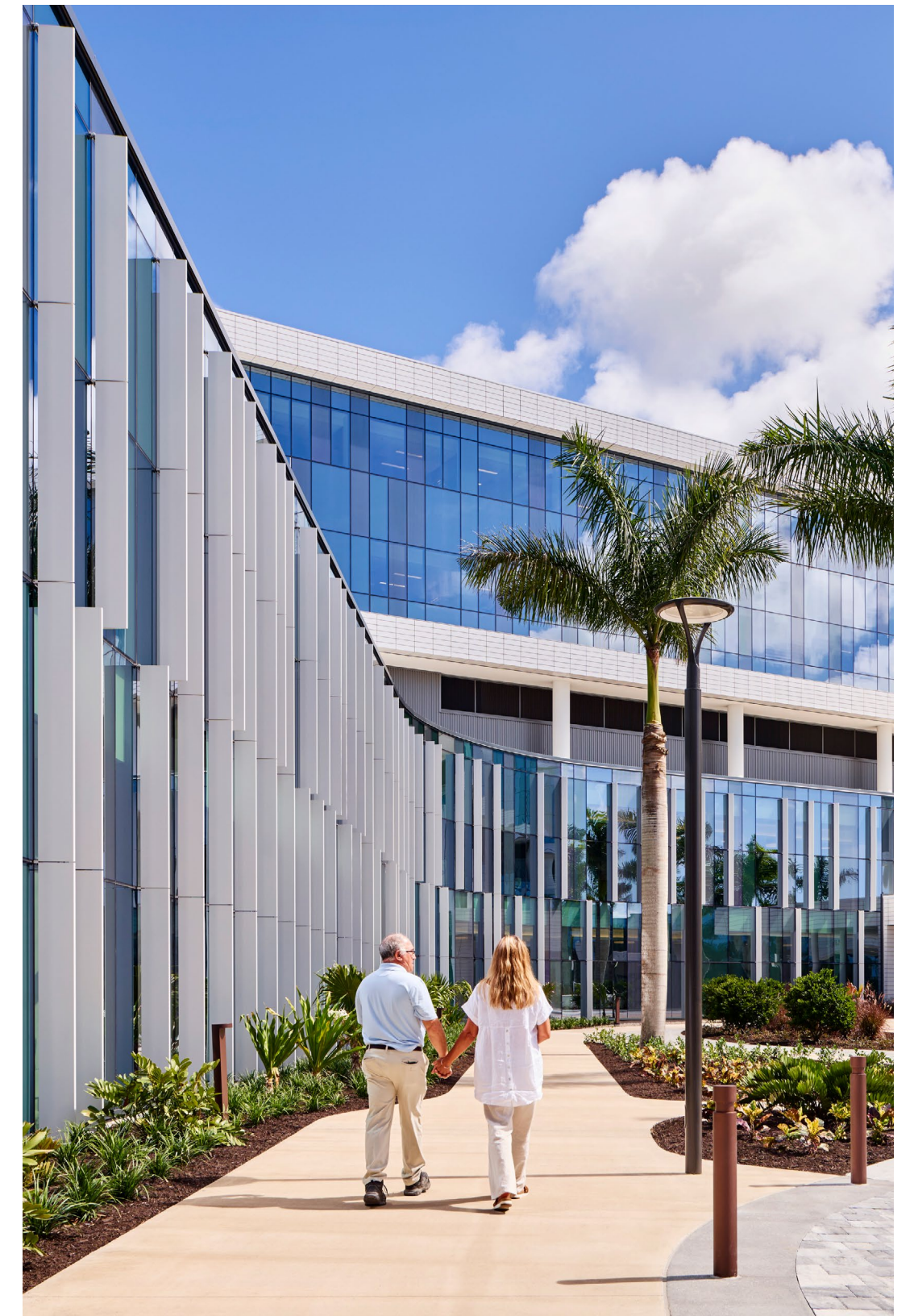
Nov. 2024 Completion

164,000 SF

ER Expansion

Dec. 2024 Completion

30,000 SF



study background

Prior to the start of the SMH-Venice design process, an interdisciplinary project team joined hospital leadership and key stakeholders to complete three visioning sessions to define overall project guiding principles and goals.

Project's Vision

To provide a growing and aging community with new safety-net services and high-quality healthcare.

To accomplish the project vision, the hospital design focused on community engagement, delivery of exceptional patient care, support for flexibility and growth, and resiliency to catastrophic events. These guiding principles served as the basis for design and provided a framework for the POE objectives and research questions:

POE Phase 1

- Community engagement
- Health promotion and wellness
- Flexibility and resilience

POE Phase 2

- Unit layout design's impact on efficiency and experience
- Collaboration
- Visibility
- Workflows and productivity



data collection methods

A thorough mixed-method, phased POE research plan was developed to evaluate the research focus areas.



Phase 1 - Completed Fall 2023

- **Staff Questionnaire:** 36 members of leadership surveyed
- **On-site Walkthroughs:** Gemba walkthroughs with department managers and five inpatient units
- **The Center for Healthcare Design Audit Tool**
- **2 Focus Groups:** Hospital executive leadership team and inpatient nursing leadership
 - An open-ended, semi-structured interview script was developed and used to guide the conversation that was recorded and later transcribed by a researcher

Phase 2 - Completed Fall 2024

- **Staff Questionnaire:** 136 inpatient staff surveyed, approximately half of which were nursing staff
- **Staff Shadowing:** Shadowed inpatient unit staff in original hospital and expansion bed tower for approximately 30 total hours to identify workflows, travel paths, and activity locations
- **Retrospective Data Analysis:** Compared outcomes to budgeted facility, system, and state benchmarks
 - Patient Satisfaction (HCAHPS)
 - Average Length of Stay
 - Volumes (Inpatient, ED, Surgery)

spaces evaluated

Phase 1

• Wellness & Amenity Spaces

- Meditation Room (lvl 2)
- Health Connection (lvl 1)
- Outdoor Seating & Patio (lvl 1)
- Cafe & Cafeteria (lvl 1)
- Gift Shop (lvl 1)

• Ancillary

• Inpatient

Phase 2

• Inpatient Unit Layouts

- ICU (lvl 4)
- Stepdown (lvl 4)
- Medical-Surgical (lvl 4 & 5)

• Core and Support Spaces

- Team Workstations
- Patient Rooms

■ Patient Care	■ Pharmacy
■ Diagnostic & Treatment	■ Pharmacy Storage
■ Care Support	■ Simulation & Training
■ Food & Retail	■ Wellness
■ Workspace/Office Space	■ Building Support
■ Office Support	■ Mechanical & Building Systems
■ Formal Collaboration	□ Shell Space
■ Informal Collaboration	
■ Lab	
■ Lab Support	

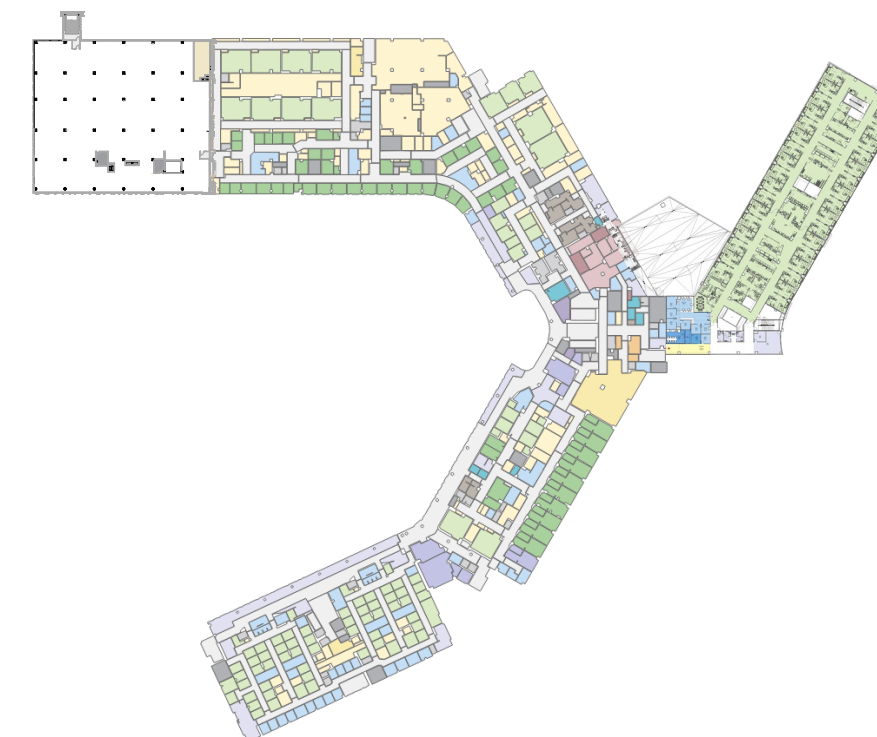
Level 1



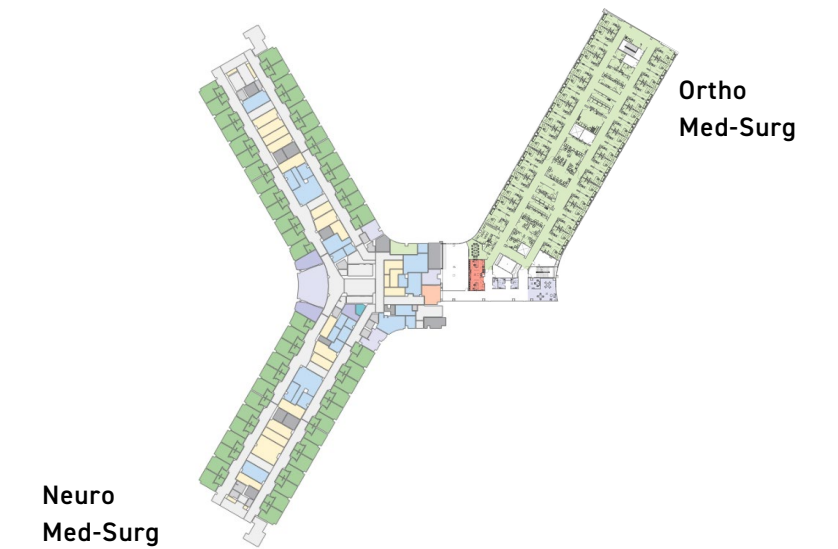
Level 4



Level 2



Level 5



phase 1 findings

Phase 1 focused on how the design supports community engagement, health and wellness, and resiliency.



Community Engagement

How are the spaces for community engagement and activity being used, and are the spaces effectively supporting community needs?

- Several spaces were provided to support community engagement, promote health and wellness, and reflect local community and culture.
 - Café and cafeteria volumes significantly exceeded expectations. Community members were found to visit unrelated to healthcare appointments.
 - The flexible HealthConnection was found to be popular for a variety of health and wellness resources and supported community engagement with SMH staff.
 - The gift shop's central location off the main lobby enables easy access and visibility, selling items reflecting the local culture and environment.

Implications

Positioning wellness amenities and functions in highly trafficked and visible areas increases passive awareness, active participation, and overall health. SMH staff cited the benefit of informal interactions promoting a sense of community and engagement.





How is the built environment contributing to health promotion and wellness?

- The Meditation Room offers a calming environment but was found to be underutilized due to lack of awareness of its availability and function.
- Artwork throughout the facilities is reflective of the local natural environment and culture.
- The hospital is strategically situated to preserve an oak tree grove and existing wetlands. Public walking paths with natural vegetation and respite areas are offered around the hospital and campus.
- The highly utilized outdoor patio offers respite and connection with nature.

Implications

Strategic visibility and intuitive wayfinding influence awareness and utilization of amenities. Signage and sponsorship could increase awareness.



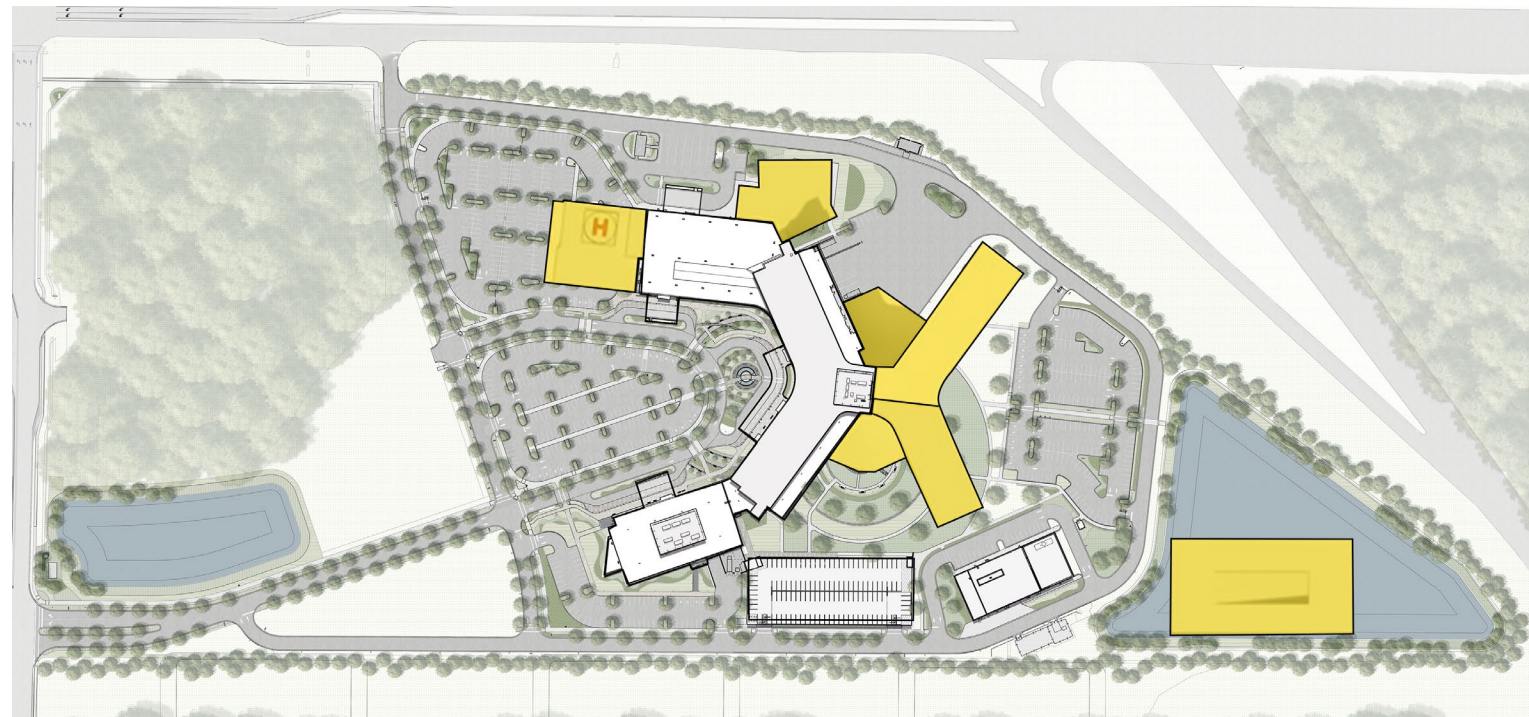
Flexibility & Resiliency

How has the hospital grown since opening, and how has the design accommodated and impacted this growth?

- Upon opening, inpatient admissions were significantly above budgeted projections, and construction of a 102-bed tower expansion began within a year.
- The strategic master plan's design provided minimal disturbance throughout construction. Despite a high census, average length of stay (ALOS) remained significantly lower than the Sarasota Campus hospital benchmark.
- Standardized patient rooms and units enables space to flex according to census and need. Upon opening, prep and recovery bays were being used as inpatient care spaces, and part of the Labor, Delivery, Recovery, and Postpartum (LDRP) unit was supporting medical/surgical patients.

Implications

Minimize interruption by planning for expansion without disrupting public areas and user experience.



The yellow in the above site plan represents the planned expansions to the original build.

How has the hospital design and construction responded to catastrophic events, such as hurricanes?

- The low water table required large, raised ground-level stormwater ponds to manage runoff and water quality on campus. These ponds are flanked with native and adapted species to provide a healthy wildlife habitat and a scenic backdrop for public walking paths.
- The hospital withstood Category 4 Hurricane Ian, remaining fully operational and serving as a FEMA community resource.

Implications

Facility planning for extreme events implies a commitment to institutional resilience as a community anchor that can remain functional during disasters.



phase 2 findings

Phase 2 focused on inpatient unit design and its impact on efficiency and the experience of staff and patients.



PROVIDER AND STAFF EXPERIENCE

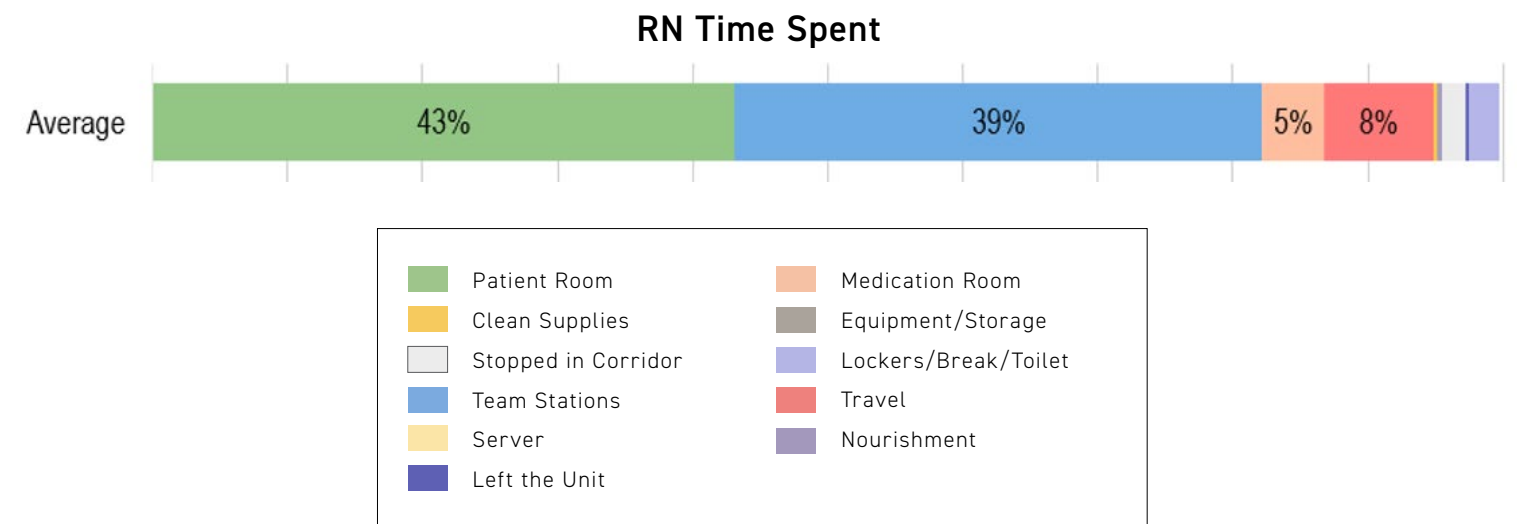
Inpatient Unit Layout

How does unit length and quantity of rooms per unit impact efficiency and experience?

- Among all five inpatient units studied, there were similar results in RN time spent in spaces/rooms.
- Overall, 87% of RN time was spent in patient rooms, team stations, and medication rooms.
- On average, 8% of RN time was spent traveling.
- Data demonstrates that unit design aids in providing RNs with an efficient work environment.

Implications

As unit length increased with the addition of six patient rooms in the expansion tower, RN workflow remained efficient. Staffing assignments to a grouping of patient rooms across the core contribute to optimizing efficiency.





Team Workstations

How does the distribution, layout, and variety of workstations impact visibility, collaboration, and experience?

- 80% staff satisfaction with variety of workstations.
- 75% staff satisfaction with proximity to other caregivers.
- 80% staff satisfaction with ability to monitor and surveil patients.
- 80% of staff respondents indicated that the unit design enhances their overall work performance.

Implications

Offering a variety of workstations for collaboration and focus work within the team zones across the core supports a satisfying and productive work environment.

Core Support Spaces

How does variation in core configuration impact efficiency and patient care?

- On average, 73% of Tech trips are between patient rooms ↔ team stations ↔ stopped in corridor.
- On average, 84% of RN trips are between patient rooms ↔ team stations ↔ medication rooms.
- An additional 20% of Tech trips are to clean supplies, server, equipment, nourishment, and soiled hold.

Implications

As the unit size increases, decentralizing core support spaces among team zones improves staff workflow efficiency.

When configuring core support spaces, consider all unit staff who access these spaces, including RNs, Techs, and ancillary staff.





Patient Room

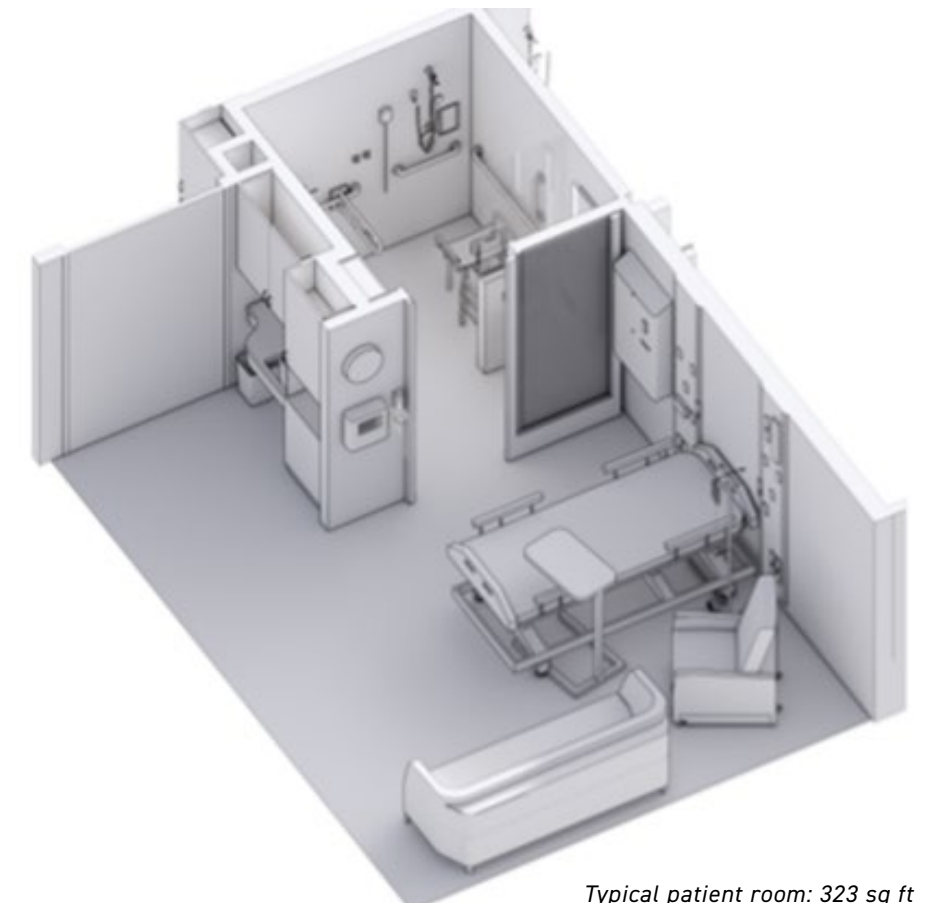
How does the room size and workspace in the patient rooms influence staff workflows, productivity, and experience?

- 88% staff satisfaction with overall design of the patient rooms.
- 83% of staff respondents indicated that the patient room design enhances their overall work performance.
- Highly satisfactory items include safety and security, patient privacy, storage for supplies and patient care items, and appealing aesthetics.

Implications

Overall, the patient room design provides a highly satisfactory work environment that enhances perceived productivity.

Consider ergonomic adjustability of bedside workstations.



Typical patient room: 323 sq ft



continuous improvement

SMH has since embarked on the planning and design for SMH-North Port, a greenfield community hospital campus. SMH-Venice POE findings informed design decisions, promoting highest and best use of space.

Impact of POE insights in planning and design:

- Optimized square footage in the new hospital
- Carried forward design features supporting high patient satisfaction and improved safety outcomes
- Informed planning and design decisions to enhance operational efficiency and staff experience, such as:
 - Inpatient staff travel distances
 - Task duration
 - Staff satisfaction

This POE will continue to guide design and continuous improvement opportunities at the SMH-Venice and SMH-North Port campuses and system wide.

[Learn more about the SMH-North Port >](#)



evidence-based awards

The project's evidence-based design approach and POE earned a **2024 Platinum Touchstone Award** presented by The Center for Health Design. It also earned an Environmental Design Research Association Certificate of Research Excellence (**2025 EDRA CORE**) designation.



These peer-reviewed awards recognize exemplary use of research in the built environment across many touchstones of collaboration, evaluation, application, and knowledge sharing.

Additional Design Awards

- 2024 International Architecture Awards Honorable Mention
- 2023 International Architecture MasterPrize Honorable Mention
- 2023 AIA Healthcare Design Award
- Healthcare Design Magazine Showcase Award
- IFI Design Distinction Silver Winner
- Wisconsin Chapter ASLA Merit Award
- 2022 IIDA Wisconsin Celebrate in Design Award
- Southeast Building Conference 2022 Aurora Award
- Illumination Award for Interior Lighting Design
- ENR Southeast Award of Merit - Healthcare Category
- AIA Tampa Bay H. Dean Rowe, FAIA Award for Design Excellence
- AIA Tampa Bay People's Choice Award
- AIA Florida Design Citation Award of Excellence



healthcare advisory services

Flad's Healthcare Advisory Services combines data, research, and purposeful innovation to create healthcare environments that work better for patients, providers and staff, and operations.

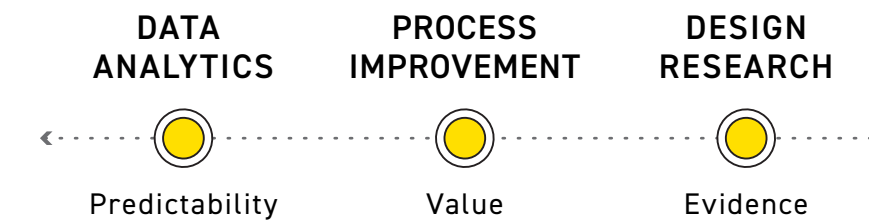
Using an evidence-based approach grounded in process improvement and design thinking, we generate solutions that go beyond best practice and deliver measurable, lasting impact.

Our multidisciplinary team brings together healthcare planners, architects, clinicians, researchers, data analysts, process improvement specialists, computer scientists, computational designers, and other healthcare experts. Together, we research and understand how the built environment

influences experience, efficiency, and clinical outcomes, and use that insight to create higher-performing buildings.

Our post-occupancy evaluation approach reinforces Flad's dedication to continuous improvement and delivering adaptable healthcare environments built for the future.

[Learn more >](#)





Contacts

Steve Jackson LEED AP
Principal
Flad Architects
sjackson@flad.com

Kara Freihoefer PhD, NCIDQ, EDAC, LEED ID+C
Director of Healthcare Research
Flad Architects
kfreihoefer@flad.com

Lauren Lazarescu MSIE
Associate Principal,
Director of Healthcare Program Development
Flad Architects
llazarescu@flad.com

Contributors

Lindsay Baumgartner
Healthcare Planner

Preeti Dalvie
Design Research Analyst

Kathryn Palmer
Healthcare Planner

Andy Park Associate AIA, LEED Green Associate
Healthcare Data and Research Analyst



Flad