

San Francisco

A Hospital With Hospitality

Luxe touches at California Pacific Medical Center's \$2.1 billion Van Ness Campus seek to lighten the mood.

BY CAROLYNE ZINKO

A TRIP TO THE HOSPITAL for a trauma is difficult enough—sterile white surroundings and glaring overhead lights only add to the discomfort. So, patients and visitors at California Pacific Medical Center's Van Ness Campus may be in for a shock—and not an unpleasant one. With a sleek glass-and-stone exterior, and interiors lined with wood-paneled hallways, artwork and a cafeteria named after the founder of Williams Sonoma, the new \$2.1 billion Sutter Health flagship is more like a Hilton than a hospital.

The building contains 11 patient floors, 274 beds in private rooms, five landscaped roofs, a covered drive-through entry with valet parking, underground parking and much more—all in over 1 million square feet of space encompassing an entire city block at Van Ness Avenue and Geary Street. "It's like a luxury hotel," says Dr. Carolyn Chang, a plastic surgeon on the hospital foundation board and one of several hundred guests at an opening-night party in February. More importantly, the hospital, designed by SmithGroup architects and HerreroBoldt general contractors, is designed with the latest seismic technology. It meets the requirements of a 1994 California law stating that, by 2030, all hospitals must be operable after an earthquake, provide their own energy off the grid and store waste water for at least three days, according to SmithGroup.

Jim Benney, a registered nurse and senior project manager and transition director at Sutter Health Facility & Property Services, can tick off hospital factoids like a kid reciting stats from baseball cards. Here's a smattering: 20 labor and delivery rooms, three cesarean section operating rooms, three nuclear medicine rooms, 13 operating rooms, 31 bays in the post-anesthesia care unit, 35 neonatal intensive care units, the latest in robotic medical equipment and a fifth-floor open-air garden with drought-tolerant plantings. "Although we have 100 percent fresh air coming into the hospital, it's still nice to go outside," Benney says. "It's healing. It's like art."

Hospitality was key to a welcoming environment, achieved by embedding architectural and interior design cues into the building, according to interior architect Kathryn Dunn and interior designer Sonia Johansen of SmithGroup. The hospital, built on a hill, has multiple entrances, including a pedestrian entry on Van Ness, a drive-through on level two and an emergency drop-off on level three. Level two's glass-door entrance has admittance portals for adult acute care and birthing/pediatrics that are done in different colors to signal where patients should go. Concierge-style reception desks at each portal provide further assistance. Instead of walking around in circles in indistinguishable white hallways, patients and visitors are guided through the building by cues such as wood walls in public hallways and near elevator lobbies, while dropped ceiling planes signal entrances to patient floors and nurse's stations. Colored portals frame entries to different departments.

Each floor has a theme, with finishes, materials, colors and oversize wall graphics to reflect it. Floors one and two (public zones) are Earth; floors three and four (for emergency, imaging and surgery) are Vegetation; floors five, seven and eight (women's and children's) are Water; floors six, nine and 10 (acute care) are Light; and the top floor (administration) is Air. Other touches include five luminous walls in public areas, 13 welcome walls at reception desks and elevator lobbies, and 306 graphic door signage panels in patients' rooms.

"One thing we thought a lot about was the idea of wellness," Johansen says. "If you think of a journey a person takes—whether having a baby, which is a natural process; or a moment of trauma—we thought about that individual's journey. You're on the way toward wellness. Sutter and CPMC wanted to communicate that with this flagship building."



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From top: The floor five courtyard garden is one of five roof gardens that, together, total 25,000 square feet of green space. The gardens are planted with native, drought-resistant grasses and ferns, such as red buckwheat, royal penstemon and hummingbird sage; "City Fruit" by Sirron Norris, part of the Hearts in San Francisco Project, which is headed by the San Francisco General Hospital Foundation and supported by CPMC.

