

## TGBa Focuses on “FLOW” for Overlake Hospital’s Downtown Bellevue Clinic

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A 6000sf, circa 1950s-60s building, once housing a First Mutual Bank branch, is now the busy site of Overlake Hospital’s Downtown Bellevue Clinic, which provides

internal medicine care to those who live or work in the downtown Bellevue area. It’s the most recent Overlake Hospital design project of several that Taylor, Gregory, Broadway Architects (TGBa) have developed. According to Dr. Alan Ertle, Chief Medical Officer and

Vice President of Network Development at Overlake Hospital Medical Center, TGBa’s health-care facility design expertise, combined with their ability to develop efficient and effective patient flow is the reason Overlake Hospital works with them.



*Overlake Hospital’s Downtown Bellevue Clinic Reception Area*

The Hospital utilized a design-build delivery approach engaging Aldrich & Associates for construction of the clinic. With an eye to staff efficiency and patient flow, TGBa applied Lean design principles to the design, but the project team did not conduct a full Lean Production Planning Process. “TGBa’s approach simply enhanced our working relationship. They wanted to understand our needs and reflect them in a cohesive, efficient design,” explained Dr. Ertle. The TGBa team needed to work within the existing square footage, so had to develop a hybrid of the onstage/offstage Lean method typically used in clinic design. The patient and staff corridors are integrated, but visual cues, such as color and materials, help delineate the areas, emphasizing the difference between staff and patient areas. Also, there was room for only one door per exam room instead of two, so the casework contains a pass-through slider for staff to restock supplies via the hallway without entering the exam room.

The clinic features larger than typical exam rooms to accommodate equipment such as a scale for height and weight measurement, and a rolling computer so the doctors can access and update patient electronic medical records or even print educational materials during an appointment. Sliding doors throughout the clinic means no needed space is crowded by swinging doors. The sliding door feature also lets a large conference room, used for group education, be divided to create a smaller meeting

space and extra treatment room. The treatment room can be used for telemedicine, as well.

Jennifer Seibert, project lead for TGBa, elaborated on the various challenges and solutions, “The existing space had 14-foot ceilings and a large open lobby. We retained the high ceilings in the new design to create a sense of openness to the street while still maintaining patient privacy. We worked with the existing footprint, creating twelve exam rooms and one procedure room.” The firm created a detached steel canopy as a new welcoming entrance and addressed sound privacy issues with an electronic speaker system that creates “pink noise,” a sound masking system. They also embellished on a favorite Overlake Hospital theme: “motion is life.” She said, “My favorite physical representation of that theme is the 8-foot curving soffit that winds its way through the clinic. It’s a strong design feature that works well with the space, and helps people move through the space.”

One particular hurdle that Overlake Hospital and TGBa overcame was the result of Bellevue’s stringent downtown design guidelines, as the clinic is situated in what is typically a retail and financial core. The original design had the waiting area opening to the side, providing more patient privacy. During the permitting process, they ran into a dilemma. Due to the retail-focused businesses surrounding the clinic, the city wanted to engage passers-by, as well as have an appealing window wall. “That retail-focused

requirement contradicted patient privacy,” Seibert shared. “But we determined that if we flipped the design – which was more complicated than it sounds, and installed an art glass installation on an undulating soffit, it would fulfill the city’s requirements.”

Dr. Ertle, asked about the challenge, responded, “The architect really deserves the credit for developing a unique solution. The display created a visually appealing and interesting view for passers-by, even at night. We continue to receive positive feedback from patients and visitors.” He shared that the clinic’s color palette, similar to that at other Overlake facilities, and organic architectural detail, together with the natural light, often causes patients to comment that the clinic feels spa-like more than clinical. “We wanted to facilitate a convenient, exceptional patient experience,” said Dr. Ertle. “The clinic has three internal medicine providers for adults plus same-day and walk-in appointments, in addition to onsite lab services.”

The attention to detail in Overlake Hospital’s Downtown Bellevue Clinic demonstrates that need for excellent medical care doesn’t always align itself with conventionally medical areas. The traditionally retail-oriented locale is ideal for those living and working in downtown Bellevue. And Overlake’s reputation of exceptional care ensures that patients also enjoy the benefit of seamless care coordination with all Overlake-affiliated specialists.

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