Los Angeles County + University of Southern California Medical Center

The renovation of the 75-year old Los Angeles County + University of Southern California (LAC + USC) Medical Center was more than 10 years in the making. The facility serves a variety of clients, from low-income families to USC medical students. Workplace Resource/Southern California helped them find a wide range of furniture solutions to meet the many demands of their diverse work areas—and their budget.

HEALTHCARE; LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

Topic:
- Brand
- Change
- Collaboration
- Health
- People

Application:
- Healthcare: Administrative Areas
- Healthcare: Caregiver Work Environments
- Healthcare: Patient Care
- Public Space/Lobby

Project Scope:
- 1.5 million square feet;
- 3 towers; 20 floors

Herman Miller Product:
- Action Office® System
- Co/Struc® System
- Resolve® System
- Vivo® Interiors (forerunner to Canvas Office Landscape™)
- Aeron® Chairs
- Brandrud Cente® Patient Chair
- Brandrud Pause® Multiple Seating
- Caper® Chairs
- Equa 2® Chairs
- Nemschoff® Pristo® Recliner
- Meridian® Pedestals
- Meridian Stackable Lateral Files
- The Intersect® Portfolio

Year Completed:
- 2008

Herman Miller Healthcare
Just because a county hospital serves low income families, does it have to look and feel like a government institution? No, it does not. At least, not in Los Angeles, where a new state-of-the-art facility is both gorgeous and well within the county-mandated budget.

More than 10 years in the making—stalled because of funding problems—the new Los Angeles County + University of Southern California (LAC + USC) Medical Center replaced a 75-year-old facility that desperately needed it; not only was it outdated, it didn’t meet earthquake and fire code regulations.

When the time came to furnish the new LAC + USC, Assistant Hospital Administrator Terence McNeal chose to work with Herman Miller dealership Workplace Resource/Southern California. “Although I had dealt with many vendors in the past, Herman Miller was the one that came through 100 percent of the time,” he says. “The quality of their furniture speaks for the quality of the company itself, the service, the people, I mean, they are just an outstanding and upstanding company to work with.

“When we were talking with the Workplace Resource folks we could see that to them this wasn’t just a sale, it was a true partnership.”

That partnering that made all the difference, says Mr. McNeal, who met with the Workplace Resource team on a weekly basis—and beyond—during the furniture selection process. “We hit the ground running, which was critical because of the deadlines we had to meet,” he recalls. “Daytime, nighttime, it didn’t matter; if we needed to talk to them about something, we knew we could pick up the phone and call them. I just can’t say enough about their incredible service.”

Mr. McNeal also relied on the team’s expertise and guidance when issues came up, such as types of materials to use, especially in the public spaces, where durability, cleanliness, and maintenance are key concerns.

“Although people immediately think ‘vinyl’ because it’s inexpensive and washable, there are many new anti-microbial fabrics and other materials that are much better for these types of applications,” says Kathie Radabaugh, project manager. “We got them out of the mindset that as a governmental body, they had to go for the cheapest solution.”
“We asked a lot of questions, listened carefully to what they needed, exposed them to things they were unaware of, and used their money as smartly, efficiently, and as forward-thinking as possible,” adds Arturo Jimenez, Account Executive. “We wanted the furniture to be as innovative as the facility itself.”

As for staying on budget, Mr. McNeal again credits great teamwork. “We really didn’t have any concerns about that because we were continually monitoring it; there was a magnifying glass on it throughout the entire process, so it never became an issue.”

The 1.5-million-square-foot facility is comprised of three separate but connected buildings—a clinic tower, a diagnostic and treatment tower, and an inpatient tower. The medical center is affiliated with the Keck School of Medicine from USC University, and it serves as the major teaching facility for more than 900 medical and surgical residents, interns, and medical students as well as other allied health professionals from their own school of nursing and other health institutions. To meet the facility’s many needs, a variety of product solutions were employed.

“We invited other manufacturers to produce samples or tweak products for particular applications, too, and we also tested their mockups in the buildings,” says Jimenez.

In patient waiting areas, Brandrud Pause seating proved ideal; it’s not only comfortable for long periods of sitting, but it’s so durable it’s “practically indestructible,” says Jimenez. “One of the hospital staff got up and started jumping on it just to prove the point!”

Other seating solutions include Brandrud’s Cente chair, which was used in patients’ rooms. It features back wheels so staff can simply (and safely) tilt it back and roll it around when necessary. Nemschoff’s Pristo recliner, with independently operated back and foot rest, was also employed in various patient areas.

As in any hospital, having furniture that can be height-adjusted to accommodate various-sized patients is also key. For that reason, height-adjustable tables were used in the Starlight Room, where children of all ages use computers and do their homework. Colorful Caper chairs on casters added to the fun, vibrant atmosphere. “Again, we didn’t want kids to feel they were in an institutional setting,” says Jimenez.
Tilt-top mobile tables were used in the hospital’s conference areas because of their flexibility; they can be joined together and move easily. “These areas served many purposes, from learning environments to executive meeting rooms, so flexibility was important,” explained Jimenez, adding that Intersect Portfolio mobile tables were used in smaller breakout areas.

As for private offices, the team came up with a Vivo (the forerunner to Canvas Office Landscape) freestanding desk configuration that orients the user away from the corner and toward the door, to be more inviting. Resolve was used for the patient discharge area, explains Radabaugh, “because its screens and images convey a feeling of warmth and comfort, again, to get away from that cold institutional environment you often see in these settings.”

Having comfortable seating for the administrative staff was also critical, says Jimenez. “They were adamant that everyone have an Aeron chair, which had only been available to upper management before. They wanted people to know from the get-go that a new day was dawning and that they valued all their people.”

As a result of the team’s commitment, partnering, and attention to detail, today the new LAC + USC Medical Center is a welcoming beacon to appreciative patients and visitors alike in East Los Angeles and from throughout the County of Los Angeles.

“This hospital is our gift to the public,” says Mr. McNeal. “It was our one opportunity to provide a facility that not only had all the latest high-tech equipment and furnishings, but would also be comforting to our clientele. And it more than exceeds all our expectations; we are really, really proud of it.”

Radabaugh and Jimenez feel the same way. “I’ve been in this business a long time, and I think of all the projects I’ve been involved with, this is the one I’m most proud of.”

Photo credit: Lisa Mills of Tony Armour Photography

[left] Brandrud specially manufactured the guest chair on the left to match the look of their Cente on the right; both have rear wheels for safe moving when tilted back.

[center] Intersect Portfolio mobile tables move in and out of small spaces as required, such as this doctors’ breakout area.

[right] Co/Struc modular components meet a variety of storage needs throughout the hospital, while Intersect mobile whiteboards can be quickly wheeled to wherever they’re needed.