

## Children's Hospital Central California Opens New Paramount Farms Plaza Expansion

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North of Fresno, in Madera County, has been the home of Children's Hospital Central California since the 1990s, when seismic requirements drove the building of a new facility. Now consistent growth

has driven an expansion. According to Jessie Hudgins, Children's Vice President of Facilities, "Inpatient services were up 4% and outpatient services were up 10% annually. Demand forecasts showed a definitive need for additional capacity in pediatric care units, operating rooms, imaging and the ED."

The hospital, which serves all of Central California, has recently completed a 60,000 sf, two-story addition, named for its largest contributor, Paramount Farms.

When the recession became evident, the hospital was well into the permitting process and just begin-



*Artist's Rendering of Children's Hospital Central California Paramount Farms Plaza Expansion*

ning construction. Despite a small reduction in population growth in the area and challenges to physician recruitment, the hospital's board of directors elected to continue with the project. Even taking into account the broader economic issues, Hudgins said that the hospital is well-positioned in terms of capacity that the facilities offer for at least the next five years. The project significantly expanded the Emergency Department, added two operating rooms and eight new treatment rooms in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit, and added a room to the Imaging Center along with another diagnostic X-ray suite. With the expansion, Children's Hospital Central California has 348 licensed beds, making it one of the nation's top ten largest pediatric hospitals.

For the project, Children's partnered with Karlsberger, with whom they'd worked on the original replacement hospital. To alleviate the firm's unfamiliarity with OSHPD, it established a partnership with a local associate architect, John Van Doren. For the general contractor, the hospital chose Turner, one of the largest healthcare contractors in the country, which had extensive experience in California and working with OSHPD. Those strong points, combined with the use of local subcontractors, created a winning team. "It's made for a very nice project; we're almost sad to see it come to an end!" said Hudgins.

When it came to design objectives,

there were several important specifics, one of which was to blend the expansion's design into that of the relatively new original building to preserve the feel of the campus. "It followed the same design elements we used with the original hospital construction," Hudgins said. They also wanted to leverage adjacency with current services, allowing for departmental expansion without separating the core departments. That meant the expansion needed to be on the western end of the building, creating some complexities, such as the need to relocate the main heli-pad and some additional buildings that were within the expansion's footprint.

The hospital, which performs over 13,000 surgeries annually, had another important design objective, which was to establish minimally invasive operating rooms. "O/R design has progressed significantly over the years, and that's the preferred layout for operating rooms now," explained Hudgins. Surgeons prefer the minimally invasive design, as today's surgical procedures promote use of endoscopic instruments and minor incisions. Most equipment is on booms, with more objects ceiling mounted, making for a much more open, obstacle-free operating room. The PICU now features decentralized nurse workstations for excellent line-of-sight visibility with the patients.

An organization's needs can change, especially during the protracted time that it takes to go

through design, permitting and construction of a hospital in California. For Children's Hospital Central California, the mid-stream change was the increased demand for pediatric MRI services. "Pediatric patients tend to move, which compromises image clarity," he said. "Because we use sedation to help counter that issue, we saw significant increases in demand for MRIs." The change meant new structural needs, as well as the accompanying OSHPD process. With state budget deficits causing hiring freezes within agencies, their local area compliance officer took on larger responsibilities, making access more of a challenge. Once that was overcome, the hospital moved forward to adopt the latest and greatest imaging technology to help meet demand, a 3T (Tesla) MRI Scanner, as well as adding a 1.5T MRI.

Further construction, in a renovation capacity within the original structure, will continue for the next year, as Children's adds a digital radiography room in imaging, and remodels the day surgery recovery and waiting room area. The move into Paramount Plaza occurred April 1st and the hospital was on-target for the area to see its first patient by the end of May. With Children's already recording the second largest number of inpatient admissions in the state of California, that's sure to be the first of many.

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