

## Vision Made Manifest with CHOC Children's Tower Expansion

**By Nora Haile**  
*Contributing Editor*  
*California Healthcare News*

Inpatient volume had more than doubled, and hospital referrals from four counties were in the hundreds – that's what drove Children's Hospital of Orange County

(CHOC Children's) to build their new 425,000 sf patient care tower. Part of the hospital's master campus expansion plan, it will house new and advanced pediatric services and meet capacity need for future generations. Located in Orange, California, the tower will

include a new Emergency Department, surgery center, lab and imaging services – all with dedicated pediatric staff. "The new tower is a physical manifestation of our vision to achieve national recognition as a premier children's hospital," said Waldo Romero, CHOC



*Artist's Rendering of Children's Hospital of Orange County (CHOC) Tower Expansion*

Children's Vice President of Facilities, Design & Construction.

Unsurprisingly, the project's Robert L. Tidwell Surgery Center has been a particular source of excitement and pride to CHOC's physicians, staff and the greater community. The Tidwell estate's \$30 million gift catapulted CHOC to \$85 million raised toward the \$125 million goal in their "Change CHOC, Change the World" fundraising campaign. Romero said that the generous gift has been transformational to CHOC Children's and its ability to advance pediatric medicine not only regionally, but also globally.

To bring their vision to reality, CHOC needed to select the right architect and general contractor. Architectural firms were prequalified then invited to partner with CHOC to express the vision for a visually stimulating and functional pediatric facility. Romero explained, "We wanted to see how they expressed the vibrant spirit and progressive clinical excellence we envisioned." Rated based on ability as well as compassion and commitment to an on-time, on-budget design, FKP Architects of Houston, Texas won the project.

For a general contractor, CHOC consciously selected one that could handle the anomalies brought on by the economic downturn: McCarthy Builders. According to Romero, the winning reason was not only did they feel McCarthy could keep a handle on costs and schedule, but also that CHOC was able to hand-pick the GC's top children's healthcare leadership team to construct Tower II. It's proven a good partnership, as con-

struction stands at 51% complete, with costs and schedule managed beyond the healthcare organization's initial expectations.

The commercial contractors have deftly juggled the scheduling impacts caused by the Office of Statewide Health Planning & Development's (OSHPD) periodic hiring freezes and intermittent furloughs. State recovery plan actions affected OSHPD's ability to adhere to previously agreed upon plan review and approval schedules. Romero felt that despite these issues, the Los Angeles OSHPD office was highly responsive and collaborative. "OSHPD has been extremely sensitive to the potential impact of plan review delays and hospital construction project approvals," commended Romero. "Their partnership approach has minimized related impacts to our Tower II project."

Romero spoke enthusiastically about the project's success to-date, particularly around design objectives. "FKP Architects combined function and form beautifully – taking into account the need for flexible room concepts for the diagnostic and treatment areas, making them adaptable to future technologies and changes in treatment techniques." The design centered on a multi-colored glass "skin" that's accented with colorful metal panels lit by a vertical beacon. A circular paving pattern starting in the front garden leads visitors through the public spaces, winding to the rooftop garden, emphasizing connectivity and flow between interior and exterior spaces.

CHOC Children's physicians, nurses and staff have been the

driving force behind the design of the new tower. As Romero explained, they're passionate about making Orange County the nation's safest and healthiest place for children. The group consulted with national experts, as well as families who know the hospital, to support CHOC's family-centered care model. According to Romero, the team has incorporated leading safety principles that reach even beyond those traditional to health-care. The goal? For the Tower to feature the most advanced design and safety principles of any children's hospital in the nation.

Though a significant financial and resource investment, the project continues on-schedule and on-budget. The continued enthusiasm is due in large part to the regular flow of information to stakeholders, using a highly robust brand campaign. The CHOC team has managed the campaign to effectively engage the community and to drive anyone interested in learning more to the project information on the CHOC website.

So while the recession brought challenges, it also brought significant cost reductions in materials and labor. CHOC's long term financial plan and strategy reflects support for the new tower, with programs and services to help them retain and attract the world's top pediatric experts. The organization also continues to build on their recent affiliation with the University of California at Irvine.

Children's Hospital of Orange County's new patient care tower, which will feature the Robert L. Tidwell Surgery Center and other essential pediatric services, will al-

low the quality and care driven organization to achieve their vision for national recognition as a pre-

mier center of children's health-care.

*Nora Haile can be reached at [nora@nhaile.com](mailto:nora@nhaile.com).*

***Reprinted with permission from the California Healthcare News. To learn more about the California Healthcare News visit [cahnews.com](http://cahnews.com).***