

## Palomar Medical Center West: Hospital of the Future

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On the west side of the Escondido city limits, Palomar Pomerado Health is building the “hospital of the future.” The 50+ acre site is about two miles from the exist-

ing Palomar Medical Center, neatly placed to be easily accessible by Escondido and San Marcos residents via either the nearby I-15 or Highway 78. The two-towered, 740,000 sf facility will house full diagnostic services, operating rooms, cardiac catheter and interventional radia-

tion, procedure rooms and space for a future inter-operative MRI, plus a large ED and Trauma Medicine area. On opening day in 2012, Palomar Medical Center West will have 288 single-patient rooms available – 120 in the West tower, and 168 medical-surgical designated



***Palomar Medical Center West***

beds in the East Tower. Eventually, as demand increases, additional “shelled” floors can be opened within the existing structure, giving the facility 360 beds.

As with many California healthcare facilities, the inception of Palomar Medical Center West (PMC West) was the result of needing to meet seismic codes. “We were faced with a facility that was situated on a site unsuitable for expansion due to size and an elevated landscape that would be cost-prohibitive to transform,” explained Marcia Jackson, Director of Facilities Planning & Transformation at Palomar Pomerado Health. “There was a convergence of state mandate, capacity issues and location. The Board and CEO felt we needed to find a larger site.”

Next, the organization studied how to create not only a new facility, but also a hospital that would look at the future of healthcare, technology and consider evidence-based design. “Champion” teams made up of staff and management examined what care delivery needed to look like and how to build an environment that would support the desired model. They also researched sustainability measures, how to create a true healing environment, and conducted site visits to other healthcare facilities. “All final recommendations were heavily research-based,” said Jackson. “Only the best of the best made it to the design phase. Our CEO was firm about building in flexibility so we didn’t preclude the next generation of healthcare.”

The best of the best included ideas

from their involvement in the Center for Health Design (Pebble Project®), where lessons learned from other healthcare facilities were a boon. “We looked at how the building itself can help actually make the room safer, mitigating risks,” Jackson mentioned. Transformation was also an operative term for design and use. While in the current center physicians each have their own space, in Palomar Medical Center West, co-location will be the norm. “For our medical teams to be as successful in the new building as they are right now, we’ve involved them at all stages of the design process.” The process also included significant input from the Board, representing the constituents, which provided insight and expertise into the final design and building.

Private patient rooms, decentralized workstations for nurses next to patient rooms, leveraging technology to facilitate communication between nurses and physicians – all aspects were brought together to improve patient care and safety. “Research showed such setups were better for quality and patient satisfaction,” she continued. “The efficient and quality workflow means the patient benefits, as does the caregiver.”

The layout, geared to support new workflow and patient-centered care, will also accommodate future technology. “Supplies will be closer to the patient’s room, so caregivers and nurses have immediate access to the core supply areas,” Wendy Cohen, Director of Facilities Construction said. “And though we can’t know what technology will bring, we can build in flexibility to modify the

building with ease.” They’ve run the cable space half-full and beefed up structure to allow for future room changes without recalculating the structure for the entire building. Plus, they designed the building to withstand a maximum earthquake event.

Cohen said, “I know patient-centricity for a hospital seems obvious, but often the concept isn’t at the forefront of the design process. It was for us, which meant we needed to design a healing, sustainable environment that supported future flexibility.” Accessibility to natural light and the outdoors occurs throughout the building, with every patient floor having at least two fully planted outdoor terraces. Cohen shared, “There was a lot of energy modeling on the front end and we selected our finishes with strong sustainability criteria in mind.” Aesthetically, Palomar Pomerado integrated the green materials to evoke a warm, welcoming feel in the common areas, including fully planting the 1.5 acre articulated roof with native plants, providing an enjoyable view for patients, as well as anyone using the third floor restaurant terrace.

As Jackson explained, Palomar Pomerado Health isn’t just building a new facility; they’re transforming their processes for care delivery. Patient-centric, built to sustainable principles with safety and efficiency at the fore, Palomar Medical Center West will surely meet its goal to be the hospital of the future.

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