

UCLA Health System Opens LEED Gold Outpatient Surgery & Medical Building

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Recently opened to accolades from the healthcare and architectural community, UCLA Health System's

new Outpatient Surgery Center and Medical Building is a stunning addition to its Santa Monica campus. Michael W. Folonis Architects, which developed the design, has the enviable notoriety of creating

an award-winning building that also happens to be their first medical facility design project. The building, described as "elegant and inspiring" won the group a 2011 National Healthcare Design Award from the



UCLA Health System Outpatient Surgery Center (Santa Monica, CA)

AIA Academy of Architecture for Health, as well as several other prestigious architectural awards.

Nautilus Group, a private development group headed by Randall Miller, selected the Folonis design via the project's architectural design contest. Miller had nothing but praise for the architect and his team; "I'd worked with Michael previously on other projects. With him as lead designer and (the late) George Pressler as the medical space planning consultant, we knew we had a winning combination."

The 50,000 sf, light-filled building is a modern complement to the other campus architecture. For instance, its sister Santa Monica property, an inpatient center, reflects the brick, craftsman style architecture that is more typical to the property. The Outpatient Surgery & Medical Building reflects Folonis' favored components of glass, concrete, and sustainable materials use. It houses eight operating rooms, two linear accelerators for cancer treatment, a pharmacy and 33 exam rooms within the department of medicine.

Capacity at the Santa Monica campus inpatient and outpatient operating rooms was stretched, as 60% of outpatient surgeries occurred in the inpatient unit. The new Center now handles that volume in its bays. Together with the extended medical care service areas – offering specialties like GI, Internal Medicine and Primary Care clinics – Santa Monica area residents and UCLA Health System participants have gained more access to top care. In fact, the site selection positives were its public transit proximity and that of the

inpatient hospital facilities.

Dr. James Atkinson, Pediatric Surgeon and former Chair of Surgery Programs at UCLA, was the health system's primary liaison with the project. "I learned about construction projects during involvement with the Reagan Hospital, working with the team to help with OSHPD and troubleshooting. Being part of the health system's growth in this way is a lot of fun at this point in my career. It's a little like surgery, you have a complex task to accomplish."

Complex though the project may have been, construction completed in near record time – only two years. The results are appealing and practical. The building's mass of concrete and steel is alleviated by extensive use of glass. Landscaping and exterior lighting gives the structure a contemporary yet inviting appearance, particularly at night. As Folonis explained, the approach was to provide a comfortable environment for patients, as well as for the staff that spends extensive time in the building. Referring to the multi-story atrium and many windows, "We wanted to bring light into areas that typically don't have natural light," he said. The atrium was also an organizing tool for the rest of the building; no painted floor stripes here. "Because of how the connection points come together – stairs, security, elevators, main entry, parking – with two sky bridges that connect the sides, the building unfolds for you as a visual map. It's very patient-friendly." Augmenting visual paths, a touch screen display at reception provides a building guide, printing maps if needed.

Another technological tool that furthers the patient-friendly experience is the fully automated parking system. Simple to use and highly convenient, the six-level, 250 space subterranean system allows drivers to leave their vehicles to be picked up by cranes which store them. Visitors and patients avoid typical dark, exhaust-filled parking garages, instead exiting and retrieving their vehicles from a beautifully appointed parking lobby. "Just pull in, drop off, and exit into the light-filled parking lobby. A quick swipe of your parking card brings the vehicle back to you – facing the outgoing direction," Atkinson described the process and laughed. "It's kind of like going to Disneyland but without the lines." Too, the non-staffed parking levels mean lighting and HVAC aren't needed, and automation eliminates drivers idling – all pluses in the sustainable measures checklist.

Eco-Conscious features prevail throughout, from low-water-use plantings in the landscape to passive solar design, a photovoltaic solar array to supply 15% of the building's energy use, 100% recycled reinforcing steel and low-flow water features, among other elements. The modern, sustainable design of UCLA's Outpatient Surgery and Medical Building offers a fresh perspective on the atmosphere of care delivery, with an ideal blend of academic and community outpatient surgery, oncology treatment and medical clinic facility.

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