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Rebranding Services and Facilities at a Community Hospital for Improved Satisfaction

Abstract | **Article**

Healthcare providers face many challenges in today's healthcare environment. Patients behave as consumers when selecting healthcare providers, creating increased competition among hospitals for market share. Rapid advances in technology and treatment protocols create new demands for space and infrastructure within aging campuses. Physicians, driven to offer comprehensive care and the latest treatment protocols to their patients, are hungry for the creation of specialty centers of excellence. Nursing shortages and an aging nursing population are causing hospitals to reevaluate their approach to space—both operationally and aesthetically—to improve safety and satisfaction.

In light of these issues, healthcare executives are embracing the role of design in differentiating and marketing services, creating a strong brand statement, impacting operations, and improving overall experience. Quality design—planning, architecture, interiors, and landscape—is now accepted as an investment that offers long-term payback. Whether improving patient outcomes and satisfaction, attracting qualified personnel, or reinforcing a hospital's commitment to its community, good design is helping healthcare organizations redefine themselves and improve the delivery of state-of-the-art services.

Advocate Lutheran General Hospital in Park Ridge, Ill., used a new capital project, The Center for Advanced Care, as an opportunity to update its image, create a marketable healthcare destination, and improve the quality of care for patients.

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A Case Study: Advocate Lutheran General Center for Advanced Care, Park Ridge, Ill.

The Mission

In early 2004, Advocate Lutheran General Hospital (ALGH) set out with a vision to create "a comprehensive, state-of-the-art outpatient facility that is recognized as a regional leader for patients seeking multidisciplinary cancer, advanced imaging, or breast-health services."

The Site

ALGH's master facility plan identified a significant shortfall in the space available for diagnostic imaging, breast-health services, and convenient visitor parking. The plan also highlighted the need to plan for emerging cancer services through improved adjacencies and synergy between areas for diagnosis and treatment. Considering competitors' recent facility investments, ALGH anticipated a negative impact on patient volumes if it did not improve facilities in a way that would better position them in the marketplace.

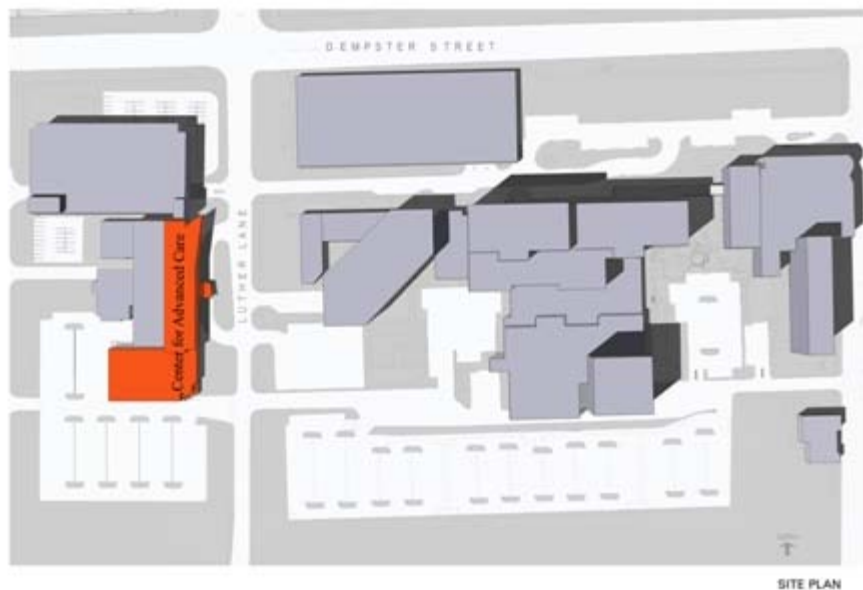


Image 1. ALGH site plan
Source: OWP/P

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An existing building on the campus, the West Pavilion, was identified as the ideal site. Its location near the existing entrance to the hospital offered substantial visual presence and an opportunity to create a signature destination on the campus (Image 1). The building housed an oncology practice, radiation oncology, and mental health services prior to the renovation but was underused. Originally designed as an alcohol-treatment hospital, the building needed substantial infrastructure improvements. Given the two existing, highly used outpatient radiation oncology vaults, the building could not be razed and would need to be kept in operation, along with the medical oncology practice, during the renovation and new construction work.



Image 2. ALGH existing facade
Photo: OWP/P

Despite its prime location, the existing structure presented a number of challenges. The image of the building was of the Hill-Burton era: uninviting and institutional (Image 2). The floor-to-floor heights were far from today's standard for high-technology medical spaces. Most important, the building would need to remain operational during the construction schedule.

The Service Line Strategy

A leadership team for the project brought together key physicians and staff from each service line. The team created a set of strategic project goals to be realized in the expanded building.



Image 3. First-floor plan for the new ALGH Center for Advanced Imaging
Source: OWP/P

The new Center for Advanced Imaging (Image 3) would be a regional leader in technology and quality and would successfully compete with freestanding imaging centers on service and accessibility. State-of-the-art digital imaging technology would be featured, including CT scanners, MRI, nuclear medicine, a PET CT scanner, ultrasound, digital radiography, and dexascan. The Center needed to be conveniently accessible for outpatient diagnosis and near the Cancer Institute and Breast Health Center to ensure seamless care coordination. Patient privacy and dignity were to be respected through the use of private changing and waiting facilities with access to natural daylight.

For the MRI and CT modalities, where outpatient procedure volumes were seeing double-digit growth, a modality module would be developed and planned. The module plan would allow for these modalities to grow within the existing footprint with only minor disruption to existing services during renovation. With the future growth in mind, beyond the internal expansion, external growth avenues for expansion were needed in the event that volumes exceed the internal renovation capacity. The modalities also had to be designed to share technical support space for operational efficiency and for modality cross-training of staff.

The existing Cancer Institute (Image 4) would be reconfigured and expanded to house a comprehensive, multidisciplinary outpatient cancer program. The major services would include radiation oncology physicians who would work closely with other specialists, medical oncologists, and surgeons to ensure the best treatment plans and support for the patients. Oncology specialists would also offer a component of care to the existing oncology services and therapy for all cancers and diseases of the blood. Through its research institute initiatives, oncology specialists would conduct and participate in

cutting-edge clinical trials for a wide range of cancers and blood disease. The inclusion of a gynecologic oncology interdisciplinary practice would provide a continuum of comprehensive care to women who have been diagnosed with pelvic malignancy or who have benign or malignant breast cancer. The Caldwell Breast Health Center would provide comprehensive women's health services. The renovation would allow these multidisciplinary services to come together to offer a continuum of care as well as a new Resource Center for patients and families. The Resource Center would be part of the American Cancer Society's Patient Navigation Services.



Image 4. Floor plans for the Cancer Institute at the Center for Advanced Care and the Caldwell Breast Health Center
Source: OWP/P

The Caldwell Breast Health Center (Image 4) was to be developed into a comprehensive, regional, multidisciplinary Breast Health Center providing screening, diagnosis, treatment, and counseling services. The Center would triple in size at the new location. It would be designed around three clinical modules that separate screening from diagnosis and treatment, and it would provide shorter wait times for patients. Its proximity to the Center for Advanced Imaging would reduce the wait times between initial visit and diagnosis. Located on the third level of the Center for Advanced Care, a clinic module concept for organization of the exam and consult pods would be used. These pods would promote patient comfort and confidentiality while also enhancing staff and operational efficiencies through proximity to decentralized tech work areas and physician reading rooms. The design team worked with the hospital to identify these modules of services: screening, diagnostics, and consultation. The modules can be quickly staffed to efficiently support both screening or diagnostic

functions when volume dictates, and additional modules can be added in the soft zone designed for the future expansion. In addition, if future patient volumes dictate, an expansion to double the floor could occur to the south over the Advanced Imaging Center.

The Design

This revitalization project was viewed as a change catalyst—an opportunity to redefine the hospital's image and set the tone for future campus development. This high-volume outpatient facility needed visibility from the campus entrance, but a recently built parking structure blocked it from view. By stretching the envelope and celebrating the main corner, this liability became a clear asset (Image 5). In addition, the team aligned the Center for Advanced Care with the existing parking structure; which allowed direct and convenient patient access to the Center for Advanced Care floors—addressing one of the project goals for patient access and convenient parking.



Image 5. The exterior design stretched the envelope at the main corner to make the facility visible from the campus entrance.

Photo: James Steinkamp, Steinkamp Photography

With a 10' 3" floor to floor and a bar-joint structural system in the existing structure, the team was challenged to develop a solution that incorporated a state-of-the-art ventilation system. The design team reviewed several options to solve infrastructure issues such as the ventilation scheme. Ultimately, a central air handling unit system with VAV for rooms was selected, which required accommodating all the ductwork in limited ceiling space. The solution was to run the ductwork mains perpendicular to the corridors and soffit down to a 7'2" height, which also was used as a design element to break up the corridor. The building also required an upgrade to current fire codes, which entailed a new fire restive construction and a new fire suppression system.

The transparent and expressive quality of the envelope assists wayfinding upon entry as a clear, day-lit guide to the many services offered at the Center for Advanced Care. Each major department—Cancer Institute, Center for Advanced Imaging, and Caldwell Breast Health Center—has its own entry and designated area, organized by a main circulation spine with a three-story atrium. This alignment also was defined by a simple wayfinding element with the patient and visitor traffic corridor along this leading edge of the new addition with daylight and exterior views to help with wayfinding from entry to services and to vehicular parking.



Image 6. Each of the three service lines at the ALGH Center for Advanced Care has its own entry and reception area.
Photo: James Steinkamp, Steinkamp Photography

The center expresses its three major service lines as separate areas, each with its own distinct entry that responds to the needs of the patients it serves (Image 6), yet each department is connected vertically by the atrium, which creates a sense of community within the building. It uses overall horizontality and overlapping elements to join them into one composition. It revels in the tension between parts and the unified whole, between the individual patient and the community of care. In addition, community-focused activities occur on the first floor: A Resource (education) Center provides patient and family with access to disease, diagnostic, and treatment information to empower them in the health and treatment of their loved ones. A meditation room and a community conference room allow for a variety of needs, from spiritual reflection to support groups and classes.

Unlike any other building on the campus, the Center for Advanced Care allows light, color, and nature to reach into the clinical environment to nurture patients, families, and staff. This project represents the beginning of a new branding statement by ALGH and is a major departure from the character of the existing buildings on campus. The Center for Advanced Care is focused on expressing a sense of optimism and hope by emphasizing transparency between exterior and interior. The organization supports a new commitment to a stewardship relationship between patients and staff. Its geometry and materials allow light, color, and nature to interact and penetrate deep into the clinical spaces. It is fresh, open, and inviting. The design embraces, nurtures, and respects the patients, their families, and staff in unassuming yet profound, ways.

The interior color palette and finish materials are inspired by nature. Color selected for the departments are based on the hues of spring in the Illinois prairie, providing an impression of new life, freshness, and optimism as well as

a familiar connection to place. The use of patterned glass allows natural light to enter interior departmental spaces and, at the same time, provides privacy. The continuity of natural materials throughout the building adds warmth and texture while offering a cohesive image. The extensive use of glass opens the programmatic elements to natural light, creating a pleasant experience for patients and staff.

The Impact

By locating all the services in the new Center for Advanced Care, ALGH now offers a multidisciplinary, team-centric approach for preventive care, diagnostics, treatment, and follow-up care. By addressing issues related to convenience and creating a welcoming environment for staff and visitors, the hospital is witnessing increases in patients, revenue, and customer satisfaction. Staff productivity has increased by integrating services into one site.

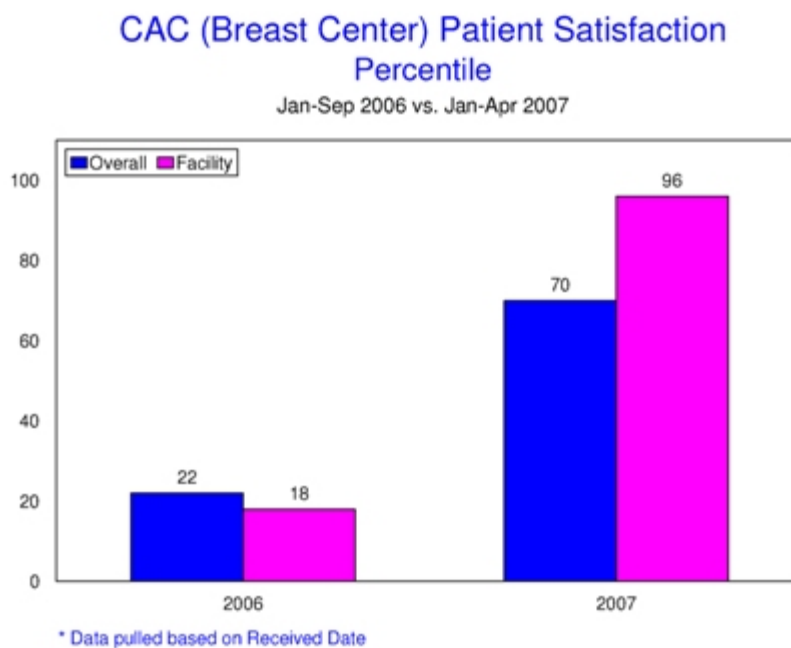


Image 7.

Source: Advocate Lutheran General Hospital

In the Caldwell Breast Center, the new care-delivery model and space design provides state-of-the-art technology that substantially increases productivity and improves report-turnaround time. In the six months since its opening, the Breast Center has seen patient satisfaction soar by more than 40 percent (Image 7). The Center for Advanced Imaging, in addition to enhanced productivity from the digital platform, has seen increased patient satisfaction increase by more than 30 percent (Image 8) due to patient convenience, broader service hours, natural daylight, and quicker throughput.

CAC (US, CT, X-Ray) Patient Satisfaction Percentile

Jan-Sep 2006 vs. Jan-Apr 2007

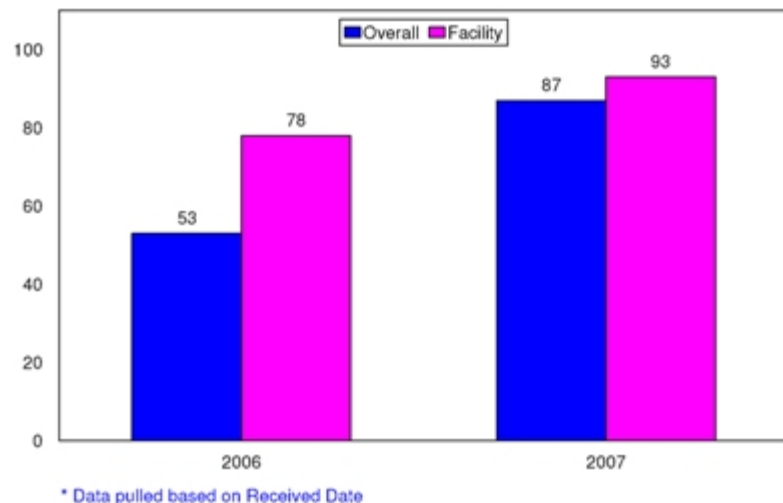


Image 8.

Source: Advocate Lutheran General Hospital

The hospital now has a marketable destination for its imaging, oncology, and breast center-related services—a building that improves the caliber of care available to its patients; an expression of how it would like to be perceived in the years to come; and a space where physicians, staff, and patients can thrive (Image 9).



Image 9. Exterior of ALGH Center for Advanced Care

Photo: James Steinkamp, Steinkamp Photography

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