



CONE HEATH ATRIUM

Sunbrella® Contract Fabrics Contribute to Friendly, Approachable Mood in the Moses H. Cone Memorial Hospital Atrium

Project:

Moses H. Cone Memorial Hospital Atrium

Architects:

HKS, Richmond, Va.

Furniture

Consultant:

Storr Healthcare Environments





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- Karin Henderson

Situation

When Cone Health, a regional integrated healthcare provider serving North Carolina's triad region, decided to add a new Women's and Children's Center to the Moses H. Cone Memorial Hospital campus, hospital leaders took a patient experience approach to the design of the new facility.

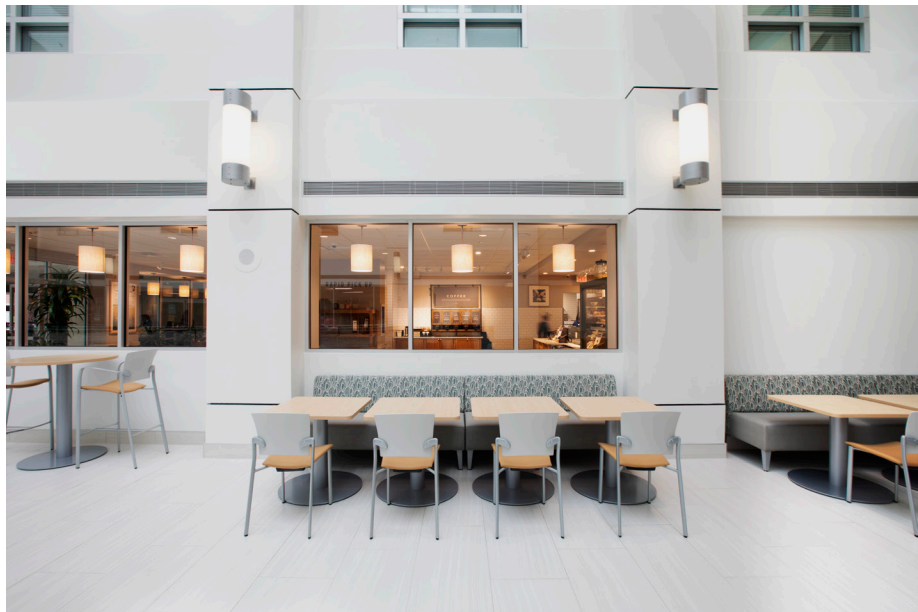
That meant collecting detailed feedback and insights from patients and their families throughout their time at the hospital.

Preliminary designs for the new Women's and Children's Center included a stack of waiting rooms – one per floor – but designers learned during ideation sessions with patients, their families and staff that many do not want to spend time in a waiting room.

"They either want to be with their patient or they want to be in a really great space, a space where they can reflect, refresh, get some outdoor light and get some food," said Karin Henderson, executive director of strategic management with Cone Health, who helped lead the design process.

The initial building design called for traditional waiting rooms. After doing focused interviews with staff and visitors, the team removed the stacked waiting rooms from the plans and refocused their efforts on transforming an existing atrium from an uninspiring pass-through into a centralized gathering space.

"For those family members who want to be there, but need a break, the atrium space comes into play," Henderson added. "It is central to the flagship campus, and we looked at how we could make it a gathering area not just for the Women's and Children's Center but for everyone on campus."



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Challenge

An Angular Atrium with a Cafeteria Vibe

The existing atrium looked and felt like a cafeteria: Furniture was mostly four-top tables with chairs lined up in rows. The color palette was mainly shades of brown. The architecture was very angular with a lot of hard surfaces. It wasn't a place where people spent time.

Based on feedback from patients and their families, the design team reframed atrium space design project to focus on the human experience and maximize opportunities to create a healing environment for patients and staff.

"Patients told us they wanted a variety of options while they were waiting," Henderson said. "They wanted the choice to gather as families, have private areas for conversations, or connect to technology – all with close access to the clinical care area. Hospitals have capital building projects all the time. Our team wanted to reinvent the patient experience based on how the spaces affected them emotionally."

"It wasn't a place where people spent time."

- Karin Henderson



The original atrium

Solution

Soften with Fabric, Furniture Shape and Variety of Seating

The patient experience design process revealed that patients and their families want to do more than wait. They need a space where they can gather, eat, work or find solitude, while being near their loved one, but not necessarily in the patient's room.

"It became a gathering space, not a waiting space," said Leslie Hanson, senior vice president and managing director of the architecture firm HKS in Richmond, Va.

Patients, their families and staff participated in innovation ideation sessions designed to understand what the space should be. Sessions included reacting to mood boards, color palettes and textures to see which resonated and which didn't.

These inputs, plus insights from architects, interior designers, healthcare furniture experts and Sunbrella Contract fabric designers resulted in color palette that combines saturated and neutral tones, including furniture and Sunbrella® Contract fabric in patterns that evoke organic forms.



Material Rooted in Local History



- 1 **Brentano Glaze in Crystalline** on the bench seating dividers presents a soft, layered, pattern inspired by brush strokes on pottery.
- 2 **Mayer Reflector in Aquamarine** is a small-scale geometric pattern on the curved seat backs of modular seating.
- 3 **Stacy Garcia Arte in Mineral** features layered looping lines on banquette seating along the walls.
- 4 **Mayer Reflector Indigo** is a small-scale geometric pattern on booth seat backs.

People were drawn to mood boards with a lot of textures and saturated colors during the ideation sessions, resulting in a color palette of blues, greens and greys with a touch of earthy terra cotta tones. High-performance, woven Sunbrella Contract fabrics on upholstered seat backs and dividers add softness and bring organic patterns to the space.

“(Using a woven fabric) adds further texture and complexity,” Hanson said. “It’s more comforting and has a natural feel that everybody relates to and the patterns are timeless and soft, but with personality. We wanted something upbeat, but flexible enough to stand the test of time and fit in with the overall feel.”

The atrium includes four fade-resistant Sunbrella® Contract fabrics on seat backs and bench seating dividers.



Material Rooted in Local History



“Bleach cleanability is very important in a healthcare setting,”

- Joshua Andrews

Andrews’s team wiped the fabrics with hospital-approved cleaners, agitated them with brushes and used an extractor on to test durability. They even used bleach during test cleaning to ensure it would not affect the fabric color.

“Bleach cleanability is very important in a healthcare setting,” Andrews added.

“Unfortunately, we have very sick people and sometimes the only thing that will kill these germs is bleach.”

Using woven high-performance Sunbrella Contract fabrics in the space also provides a connection to the textile heritage of the Triad region, and to Cone Health’s namesake, Moses H. Cone, an early textile industry innovator whose company created the first denim fabric for use in blue jeans.

Because these fabrics are UV- and fade-resistant, they’re an ideal choice for the sun-drenched atrium, which features skylights and tall windows. The same color retention applies to the fabrics’ cleanability: All are easily cleaned with just soap and water, but bleach can also be used when needed without diminishing the fabric colors.

Before specifying final upholstery, hospital officials put the fabrics through rigorous testing. They spilled food, including grape juice and coffee on fabric samples, allowing the spills to sit and dry on the fabric. They took fabric samples to the pediatric department and let children draw on it with felt pens, including the indomitable Sharpie marker.

“We needed to make sure we had a fabric that will stand up to stains and cleaning products that we use in healthcare,” said Joshua Andrews, executive director for food nutrition and environmental services for Sodexo at Moses H. Cone Memorial Hospital.



Furniture Layout that Empowers People to Gather or Find Solitude

Traffic flow is vitally important in the atrium because it connects buildings on the hospital's campus and also offers a gift shop and restaurant. Storr Healthcare Environments designers developed multiple furniture arrangements to show different traffic flow plans.

In order to avoid a feeling of "lined up" furniture, Storr designers recommended round and curved seating from ERG, Steelcase and Coalesse arranged in smaller groupings. High tops, communal tables, small round tables, chairs (with and without arms) and banquettes from the same furniture brands accommodate bariatric needs, people who want table access while standing and those looking for focused work time.

"We wanted to make sure the people coming to visit patients would feel good," said Rob Cardone, healthcare account executive with Storr. "We wanted people to feel free to move the furniture it as they please. It's a welcoming space. It helps you feel like you're not an afterthought, that you belong there."

Farm tables with USB and power outlets lend a relaxed coffee house look, while providing a space for visitors or staff who need to plug in and work.

"...you belong there."

- Rob Cardone



Result

The New Center of the Hospital Campus

The design team understood the atrium renovation as an opportunity to create a healing environment that benefits the entire hospital campus from patients and visiting family and friends to medical and support staff.

“It was an underutilized space, but it has the opportunity to be the heartbeat of the campus,” Henderson said.

Glen Raven, the company that created the Sunbrella brand, donated Sunbrella Contract fabrics for the project.

“The design of the atrium emphasizes a human connection in a place and time where people need it most,” said Glen Raven, Inc., CEO Leib Oehmig. “For Sunbrella® Contract’s part, we are thrilled to deliver a fabric that is comfortable, first and foremost, and tough, keeping this space beautiful for years to come.”

The atrium opened in August 2019 and post occupancy research is on the horizon, so the team can understand how people respond to and use the new space.

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