

# WOMEN'S BUSINESS BOSTON

## Renovate health care facilities for current, future use

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With a changing health care landscape and tight real estate market, many health care providers, outgrowing their existing medical facilities, are turning to interior designers and architects to evaluate their existing buildings.

A design team can evaluate available spaces, identify facility requirements and develop plan layouts that provide flexibility and growth for future programmatic and technological demands.

A well-designed program – a list of areas, rooms, equipment, square footages and adjacencies – should fit the provider's current, as well as projected, needs.

It is important to understand how users function within spaces to allow for appropriate growth and flexibility. This due diligence is later reflected in many aspects of design, including partition extents, acoustics, lighting levels, restroom placement and storage needs.

Space requirements are also affected by regulations of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), building codes, life safety compliances, security requirements and minimum furnishing and equipment clearances – all of which designers consider carefully as they develop schematic test fit plans.

Technology is one design element that is significantly transforming the way people function within a medical facility. The increased use of technology often affects the square footage traditionally required of spaces such as waiting and reception areas, medical record rooms and patient exam rooms.

Likewise, health care facilities would be wise to plan ahead for current and future medical technologies that require additional space and acoustical considerations.

Many health care organizations are also beginning to embrace green design practices in their facilities. Designing to green standards might affect the space plan by reusing existing spaces to minimize construction waste or arranging the floor plan to best capture natural light and outside views.

By incorporating sustainable products and processes, providers can also realize significant savings in lighting, heating and cooling costs.

As the nation's population continues to diversify, health care providers are increasingly accommodating the unique cultural and age-related needs and preferences of their patients.

For example, medical practices that primarily serve elderly populations often feature colors, patterns and textures that offer the comfort of a homey environment. For others, hospitality amenities are being incorporated to provide relaxation, comfort and conveniences.

Some of these new programmatic considerations include spaces for a concierge, a business center, retail shops, dining rooms and cafes, reference libraries and outdoor spaces.

Family-friendly spaces may also combine lounges and well-equipped family rooms with work areas, video games and televisions.

Successful health care facility designs are the result of collaboration early in the design process between health care providers, users and design professionals. Aligning a design program with a

facility's service model and operational and technological requirements can improve workflow, save time and money, and contribute to happy, healthy patients.

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