



# the path to health

How Wayfinding Is Improving the Healing Process—  
And Hospitals' Bottom Lines

**T**he glass pyramid at The Louvre; the spiral atrium at the Guggenheim; the neon signs at Times Square—each of these iconic symbols gives visitors a sense of place and helps them come to terms with disarmingly large, complex spaces. Could the same idea also be applied to hospital design?

With the healthcare building boom in full swing, hospitals across the country are expanding, building bigger and better medical facilities that incorporate the latest medical technologies and seek to enhance the patient experience.

Many hospitals recognize that good wayfinding is synonymous with good patient flow, and that applying simple organizational, architectural and graphic principles not only reduces patient stress and anxiety, but can lead to improved patient outcomes, profitability, safety and staff utilization.



# INFORMATION

Información • Информация • 探訪詢問處 • معلومات

- 105 Medical Records
- 1N1 W.I.C. Center
- 1N20 Managed Care
- 1N61 Outpatient Registration
- 1N61 Medical Office
- 1W2 Admitting
- 1W22 Pre-procedure Testing
- 1W51 Diagnostic Center
- 2N1 Patient Accounts
- 3N Pharmacy
- 4N98 Rehabilitation Medicine
- 5N Medical Services
- 5N70 Radiology
- 8N Patient Relations
- 8N Obstetrics / Gynecology

- 105 Records Médicos
- 1N1 Centro de W.I.C.
- 1N20 Servicios médicos administrados
- 1N61 Registro de Pacientes Ambulatorios
- 1N61 Consultorio Medicalaid
- 1W2 Admisión
- 1W22 Prueba Previa al Procedimiento
- 1W51 Centro de Diagnóstico
- 2N1 Cuentas de los Pacientes
- 3N Farmacia
- 4N98 Rehabilitación
- 5N Servicios Médicos
- 5N70 Radiología
- 8N Relaciones del Paciente
- 8N Obstetricia / Ginecología

- 1 Servicios de Salud para Adolescentes
- 1 Pediatría
- 1 Unidades de Cuidados para Pacientes Hospitalizados
- 1 Servicios de Emergencia
- 1 MRI

- 105
- 1N1
- 1N20
- 1N61
- 1N61
- 1W2
- 1W22
- 1W51
- 1W51
- 2N1
- 3N
- 4N98
- 5N
- 5N70
- 8N

Регистратура  
 Центр программы "Для матери"  
 Мелобслуживание по страховке  
 Регистрация амбулаторных  
 Регистрации амбулаторных  
 Офис программы "Медикейд"  
 Приемная-регистратура  
 Отделение анализов перед  
 Диагностический  
 Отделение счетов пациент  
 Аптека  
 Микстура Реабилитации  
 Отделение медицинский  
 Радиология  
 Офис жалоб и предло  
 Отделение акушерств

- 1
- 1
- 1
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- 1

Отделение услуг по охран  
 Педиатрия  
 Палаты для стациона  
 Отделение услуг  
 Отделение магнитор

- 105 醫務紀錄
- 1N1 W.I.C.中心
- 1N20 醫療管理
- 1N61 門診登記
- 1N61 醫療辦公室
- 1W2 入院登記
- 1W22 手術前測試
- 1W51 診斷中心
- 1W51 門診登記
- 2N1 藥房
- 3N 康復科
- 4N98 物理治療
- 5N 醫療服務
- 5N70 放射科
- 8N 病人關係

- 105 طبی ریکارڈز
- 1N1 سنٹر W.I.C.
- 1N20 منظم دیکھائت
- 1N61 انراج
- 1N61 دفتر برائے طبی امداد
- 1W2 داخلہ
- 1W22 قبل کارروائی جانچ
- 1W51 تشخیصی مرکز
- 1W51 مریضوں کا حساب کتاب
- 2N1 فارمیسی (دواخانہ)
- 3N

This directory at Coney Island Hospital in New York City, offers patients and visitors information in five different languages—English, Spanish, Russian, Chinese and Urdu.

1



“Without a clear wayfinding system, time, energy and money are lost in directing people throughout the hospital,” said Anjali Joseph, research director at the Center for Health Design, a nonprofit research and hospital advocacy organization based in Concord, Calif.

“One study of a major tertiary care hospital calculated the annual cost of ‘wayfinding’ at \$220,000—mainly due to the unnecessary time spent direction giving (more than 4,500 staff hours) by people other than information staff.”

Using a combination of good planning, distinctive architectural elements and coordinated graphic signage, hospital and medical centers can create easily navigable environments that empower patients and put them at ease.

“Hospitals traditionally have not been the most well organized places,” said Ros Cama, chairwoman for the Center for Health Design.

“By nature of their often haphazard growth, it can be tough to figure out how to get around. But now, a growing number of hospitals recognize that improving navigation can reduce stress and improve quality of care,” Cama said.

Good design starts with good planning. Hospitals can become a maze of disconnected, disorienting spaces due to the complexity of their functions and programs. To combat this problem, one approach is to “layer” or zone spaces, gradually moving from public to private.

“The old model of floor design—row upon row of identical rooms off a long indistinguishable corridor—just

isn’t effective anymore,” said Rick Wade, senior vice president of communications for the American Hospital Association.

Hospitals like Gouverneur Health-care Services in New York City are using this layering approach to reinvent how patients move from entry to treatment.

By expanding the base of Gouverneur’s existing building with a wrapped 75,000-square-foot, five-story glass-encased addition, the design team at Hillier has created an active and engaging entrance area that easily disperses patients to waiting areas set along the perimeter of the hospital that are filled with natural light and have great views of the city. Patients can then filter back to areas for check-in, registration, consultation and treatment.

“Wayfinding isn’t about ‘just get me in the door and don’t get me lost.’ When we were designing a children’s hospital and asked parents what they wanted in the facility, one mother wanted ‘direction and diversion’—get me where I need to go, but make me forget why I’m going there.’ It’s about making the experience both organized and enjoyable,” Cama said.

Applying these principles uniformly makes wayfinding intuitive, so that patients do not have to think about where they are going. It also reinforc-

2



es the architectural and graphic tools that can be used to further improve the experience of patients, families and caregivers.

At Good Samaritan Hospital in Lebanon, Pa., a three-story glass atrium centered around the hospital’s main elevator core creates a natural focal point for visitors. Appropriately known to hospital personnel as “The Beacon,” the atrium provides patients and staff with a highly visible landmark that makes navigating the building easier.

“Our old lobby was dark, uninviting and just didn’t make a good impression,” said Bill Hendrick, chief

1-2: RENDERING BY HILLIER ARCHITECTURE



**1. By expanding the base of Gouverneur's existing building with a wrapped five-story, 75,000-square-foot glass-encased addition, the design team at Hillier has created an active and engaging entrance area that easily disperses patients to waiting areas set along the perimeter of the hospital that are filled with natural light and have great views of the city.**

**2. With an open feel and tons of natural light, the new entrance lobby at Gouverneur Healthcare Services in New York City will be welcoming and clearly direct patients, visitors and family to their ultimate destination.**

**3. When the Cancer Institute of New Jersey in New Brunswick decided to create a new six-story addition, great care was taken to make sure the new space would be transparent—offering patients and visitors clear views of where they were or wanted to be. In the main lobby, large windows keep spaces open and connect patients to the outdoors.**

**4. At Good Samaritan Hospital in Lebanon, Pa., a three-story glass atrium centered on the hospital's main elevator core creates a natural focal point for visitors. Appropriately known to hospital personnel as "The Beacon," the atrium provides patients and staff with a highly visible landmark that makes navigating the building easier.**

operating officer at Good Samaritan. "Now we've got a beautiful entrance that's filled with natural light and houses our centralized information desk, making it easy for patients to see where they need to go."

Similarly, when the Cancer Institute of New Jersey in New Brunswick decided to build a new six-story addition, great care was taken to make sure the new space would be transparent, offering patients and visitors clear views of where they were or wanted to be.

Skylights and views to gardens or downtown New Brunswick in other areas of the institute keep spaces open and connect patients to the outdoors.

"Hillier composed our facility so



3: COLIN MOSHER 4: PAMMI SHIRK, SIMONE ASSOCIATES



**1. Simple, color-coded signage combined with corridors that offer clear views to where patients and visitors are moving to and from, helped improve navigation at Coney Island Hospital in New York City.**

**2. As part of its Limited English Proficiency graphic wayfinding program for the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation, Hillier Architecture used multi-lingual super-graphics to identify waiting areas with a landmark.**



that visitors are greeted with light, space and warmth,” said Linda Barker, chief administrative officer for The Cancer Institute of New Jersey. “Patients appreciate the ability to navigate the center with confidence and ease, through intuition and simple directions.”

A graphic wayfinding package that includes take-home maps, written directions and on-site maps and directories augments the architectural elements of wayfinding.

At the Cancer Institute of New Jersey, “wayfinding is based on thoughtful design and minimal carefully located signage rather than the cacophony of complicated signs that plague many biomedical institutions,” Barker added. To enhance this, unified logos and color-coding as well as placement of landmarks—like fountains, sculpture or super-graphics—enhance patient orientation and facility brand.

“You could have the best medical care in the world, but if your facility looks shabby and patients can’t find their way around, they’re not going to trust in your ability to offer quality care,” said Good Samaritan’s Hendrick. “It’s all about making a good impression.”

In addition, faced with a growing multinational patient base, many



hospitals are making wayfinding multilingual.

For the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation, Hillier designed a graphic wayfinding system that uses a Limited English Proficiency approach. For interior signs and materials like take-home maps and brochures, the hospital’s departments and messages are spelled out in eight different languages—everything from English and Spanish to Mandarin and Urdu.

“Signage is just as important as the physical layout of a building,” Wade said. “And in today’s multicultural, multilingual environment, hospitals are making sure that care is culturally competent as well as medically competent.

“Hospitals don’t have to be scary places,” he continued. “Hospitals today recognize that creating an environment that’s conducive to a patient’s

well-being and family’s well-being is imperative and that everything from building design to directional signage plays an important role.” ■

**Colin Mosher, AIA, is an associate principal at Hillier Architecture. A specialist in healthcare design, he designed the Cancer Institute of New Jersey, Good Samaritan Hospital and the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey Cancer Center.**

**John Bosio, SEGD, is the managing principal of Hillier Architecture’s Environmental Graphic Design practice. His work unifies graphic design, industrial design, lighting, interiors, planning and architecture. He is also the Mid-Atlantic regional representative for the Society of Environmental Graphic Design.**