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Using design-build for health care facilities

Posted: 4:03 pm Tue, November 16, 2010

By ROB FLICKINGER



Rob Flickinger

Association: Design Build Institute of America - Upper Midwest Region

Efficiency, cleanliness, accessibility, security, sustainability, codes and standards are the vital building blocks of a quality health care facility design. It takes a team of experts to design a facility that follows the rules and fits the needs of health care provider and patient.

You could - and should - spend a long time working out the fine details. But when “shovel-ready” is thrown into the mix, there’s no time to wait. That’s why the design-build process is fast becoming the tool of the moment.

The design of hospitals has come a long way. The long hallways of yesteryear have been replaced by compact shapes. In contrast, the process of design-build has been around for ages. In the world’s first great civilizations, monumental structures were built by master builders who used this time-honored tradition. And yet, only recently has the design-build process been significantly utilized for health care facilities, as it works so well for maximizing those vital stimulus funds.

While the design of a health care facility is painstakingly complex, the process of building it doesn’t have to be. Whether it’s determining bed-related, outpatient-related or research needs, you can work out the details with a dedicated team when the time is appropriate, without delaying the start of patient care. No more designing with one team and building with an unrelated one. With design-build, you’ll work with a single team from start to finish - typically the best elements of a design firm and a construction company, both very familiar with each other and both committed to completing your project on an agreed-upon

budget.

You'll start the project with a simple discussion: What do you need the building to do? As the basics are uncovered - how big, how many rooms, where will it be, what structural materials are needed - the budget is also laid out. The estimate is based on a concept and sets the expectations for both parties, before any detailed drawings exist. Excavation can start, and the foundation laid, while you work through the details with the team, taking it one area at a time. And if any nonessential costs can be trimmed to make room for a few other amenities, they'll let you know.

Recent health care facility projects utilizing the proven design-build process include the Highland Hospital Acute Tower Replacement Project in California and Glendale Adventist Acute Care Facility in Glendale, Calif.

If all this sounds good, but you're still not sure, stop by the Design-Build Institute of America (DBIA) booth Dec. 8 at the LifeScience Alley Conference at the Minneapolis Convention Center and we'll be able to provide you with more information.

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