



Stunning art installations reinforce Jefferson Health's connection to the community it serves, enriching the quality of the public spaces within the building.

18 AUGUST 2024

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# FRESH THREAD



Jefferson Health's  
Honickman Center  
punctuates the  
Philadelphia skyline with  
a bold, fabric-inspired  
façade and an engaging  
public art program  
*By Brooke Bilyj*

AUGUST 2024

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THE EPICENTER of a billion-dollar urban development in the East Market neighborhood of Philadelphia, Jefferson Health's multispecialty outpatient center is reshaping the city skyline with a new integrated care facility. Opened in March 2024, the Honickman Center consolidates a range of ambulatory services into one convenient location across the street from Jefferson's existing in-patient hospital.

"We had 19 disparate clinics spread out across five or six city blocks around the main hospital building," says Dr. Catriona Harrop, associate chief physician executive at Jefferson Health (Philadelphia). "By bringing our outpatient practices together under one roof, we were able to simplify the patient experience, making care as seamless as possible."

Designed by Ennead Architects (New York) and Stantec (Philadelphia), the \$762 million building spans 462,000 square feet across 19 floors that contain more than 300 exam rooms, 10 outpatient operating rooms, and 58 infusion chairs. The Honickman Center houses specialties such as cardiology, gastroenterology, hematology, rheumatology, and urology, along with the Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center and other specialized practices.

By emphasizing accessibility and inclusivity to welcome patients with diverse needs and abilities, the facility provides an inviting public space

**"WE WERE ABLE TO SIMPLIFY THE PATIENT EXPERIENCE, MAKING CARE AS SEAMLESS AS POSSIBLE."**

—DR. CATRIONA HARROP, JEFFERSON HEALTH

while establishing a bold brand identity for Jefferson Health and "creating a space that's much more conducive to healing," Harrop says.

**CONSOLIDATING SERVICES**

As planning began in 2018, the design team was challenged to work within Philadelphia's distinctive skyline. Jarrett Pelletier, principal at Ennead, explains, "there's a view corridor that must be maintained when you're standing on the steps at the art museum looking back at the William Penn statue on top of City Hall," a vantage made famous in the 1976 film "Rocky."

Standing just to the side of this iconic scene, Jefferson's specialty care pavilion had to be carefully massed. "The building has to jog as it gets higher, so there's two floor plate sizes—a low-rise



20 AUGUST 2024

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size of 26,000 square feet and a high-rise size of 21,000 square feet,” Pelletier explains. “We were only able to build the wider floor plate up to the 15th floor, and above that, there’s a smaller floor plate to keep that view unencumbered.”

This zoning-driven decision helped dictate the placement of certain services and specialty practices within the building. For example, the tiered floor plate configurations created extra space on the 15th floor for a rooftop terrace garden. This landscaped oasis became the centerpiece of the Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center, which occupies the upper floors. “We programmed those functions around the rooftop garden, so the oncology suites and infusion bays are adjacent,” which offered spectacular garden views to infusion patients, Pelletier says.

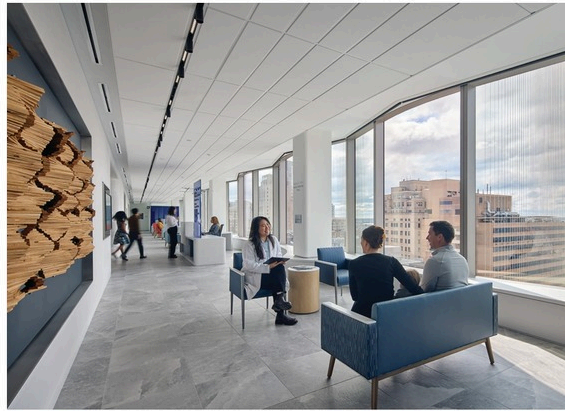
Meanwhile, core services such as radiology, ambulatory surgery, and endoscopy are arranged on lower floors of the facility—occupying levels four, five, and seven, respectively, with the sixth floor dedicated to staff support space. Pelletier says the location of these services on lower floors promotes accessibility for patients going back and forth between appointments, while supporting the structural vibrations of heavy medical equipment.

Other specialty clinics, including digestive health, neuroscience, and otolaryngology, occupy the remaining levels. Leveraging a standardized design template, the clinical floors feature linear waiting areas along the front of the building, lined with south-facing windows that flood these “sky lobbies” in natural light. Patients progress into clinical pods comprising several exam rooms flanked by team rooms for medical assistants at the front of each hallway, with separate team rooms for nurses and physicians in the back. “The design enhanced our ability to provide more collaborative care,” Harrop says. “We normally function in multidisciplinary teams, but

**ABOVE AND RIGHT:** The new building integrates into Philadelphia’s dense urban neighborhood while introducing a dynamic sculptural glass façade composed of curved “pleats.” **OPPOSITE:** In lieu of a traditional registration desk, kiosks in the first-floor lobby streamline the check-in process, while patient ambassadors stand ready to help guests navigate to the right floor.



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we didn't have the space that encouraged those collaborations until now."

**FABRIC OF PHILADELPHIA**

At 19 stories, the third-tallest building east of Broad Street, the Honickman Center had to look like it belonged in the urban cityscape. Inspired by the rich history of textile production in Philadelphia—and specifically at Thomas Jefferson University (TJU), which originated as Philadelphia Textile School—the design team created a sculptural glass façade composed of curved “pleats” that mimic fabric.

**TOP:** The second-floor patient lounge includes sculpted bamboo pods that wrap around seating areas to provide privacy and sensory isolation. **ABOVE, LEFT:** Soothing murals of nature scenes create a relaxing atmosphere in the Honickman Breast Imaging Center. **ABOVE, RIGHT:** Sky lobbies on the upper clinical floors offer spectacular city views.

These compound curves aren't just architectural details; they're also sustainable features of the building, which achieved LEED Gold certification. “At the point of each pleat, the fritting on the glass becomes more opaque,” Pelletier explains. “It actually works to reduce solar heat gain on the façade because the points shade the bellies of the pleat, which are transparent.”

Inside the building, these curves manifest as bay window seats along the sky lobbies on each floor. The fritting offers shade to make the protruding spaces feel protected, without obstructing views of the city. “This modulation allows the façade to be a sustainable feature as well as an experiential feature for the patient,” Pelletier says.

The textile concept repeats through interior finishes as well. “We wanted to create a design with a highly tactile quality that feels soft, welcoming, and caring,” Pelletier says. “For example, the elevator cores are clad in

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etched glass that is grazed with soft light.” Similarly, extruded metal walls and sculpted bamboo pods in the patient lounge on the second floor provide more of that “tactile quality with a hand-made touch,” Pelletier says.

**SENSORY-FRIENDLY EXPERIENCE**

In line with Jefferson Health’s vision to make care more accessible for everyone, the outpatient care center had to address a range of patient needs, abilities, and sensitivities, such as sensory processing disorders that make neurodiverse patients hyper- or hyposensitive to surrounding stimuli. High-touch design elements were a key consideration, not just to support the theme of texture and tactility, but to address the needs of patients with varying sensory tolerances. “We created sensory alcoves on the second floor to provide enclosed spaces that offer some privacy,” Harrop says. “And for those who need sensory stimulation, we have high-touch surfaces.”

For example, Corian walls across from the sky lobby windows on the clinical floors are textured with grooved lines, like ripples that resemble sand at the beach, encouraging patients to run their hands along the wall. Similarly, alcoves on every floor feature custom-made sensory-friendly seating developed by industrial design students at TJU led by Dr. Wendy Ross, director of the Jefferson Center for Autism and Neurodiversity. The furniture features high backing that wraps around three sides to provide sensory isolation and privacy, while raised bumps on the arms of these chairs provide another calming sensory element. “The thoughtful attention to furniture and materiality goes a long way to make patients feel like this space was specifically designed for them to feel comfortable,” Pelletier says.

**ACTIVATING THE STREETScape**

As the cornerstone of a vibrant, mixed-use urban development, the Honickman Center was also envisioned as a community asset that could invigorate the revitalized East Market neighborhood. “We see healthcare facilities as trusted civic institutions, not unlike libraries or museums,” says Thomas Wong, partner at Ennead Architects. “Healthcare projects must participate in the city, both in the skyline and at the street level and everything in between, to welcome and engage the community by providing an elevated experience that enhances the delivery of care.”

To that end, the project team wanted to create a welcoming environment that engages passers-by and patients alike. An important aspect of this strategy is an “approach to public art that spills



Nature-inspired hues of blue and green create calming, colorful clinical hallways while providing helpful wayfinding cues.

out from the building’s lobby into the urban space,” Pelletier says.

Most prominent is a public art gallery that runs 150 feet along Chestnut Street, behind a two-story expanse of glass tucked underneath the building’s pleated façade. The 30-foot-tall gallery features a hanging sculpture composed of fabric swatches—some of which are taken from the institution’s collection, Pelletier notes. “The building creates a beautiful glass case that allows the gallery to activate the street with something very visual,” he says.

Art installations also adorn several entrances of the facility, including a hanging sculpture in the main lobby and a large metal sculpture featured outside the north side of the building. “It makes the space feel welcoming and also very connected to the community,” Pelletier says.

**FOSTERING ENGAGEMENT**

By consolidating a range of medical services inside an accessible facility that welcomes visitors with its high-touch design, the Honickman Center blends healthcare programming with the public engagement of museums, academic campuses, and other civic institutions.

“Oftentimes, medical programs are very inward focused, and you’re fighting to make every square inch as efficient as possible. Here, we had the opportunity to make a building that looks out as much as it looks in,” Pelletier says. “This project offers some good lessons about building these kinds of medical facilities in a dense urban environment. Paying attention to the public realm in and around a building has real value.”

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**PROJECT DETAILS**  
**Project:** Honickman Center  
**Location:** Philadelphia  
**Completion date:** April 2024  
**Owner:** Jefferson Health  
**Total building area:** approx. 462,000 sq. ft.  
**Total construction cost:** \$762 million  
**Cost/sq. ft.:** Not provided  
**Architect:** Ennead Architects, Stantec (clinical floors)  
**Interior designer:** Stantec (clinical floors), Ennead (public floors)  
**General contractor:** LF Driscoll+Hunter Roberts JV  
**Developer:** National Real Estate Development  
**Medical equipment planner:** Jensen Partners  
**Art/pictures:** Laviit, Jacob Hashimoto, Tobi Kahn  
**Carpet/flooring:** Florim, Bolon  
**Doors/locks/hardware:** Ellison Bronze, Stanley, Dorma, CRL  
**Fabric/textiles:** DFB  
**Signage/wayfinding:** AGS  
**Surfaces—solid/other:** Plyboo, Corian, Senio, McGrory Glass

*For an expanded list, visit [hcdmagazine.com](http://hcdmagazine.com). Project details are provided by the design team and not vetted by Healthcare Design.*

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