



Bright Planter Designs Warm a Hospital

Case Study - Palomar Health Campus

Patient gathering spaces that needed an emotional lift

Palomar Health is a California health care district serving communities in an 850-square-mile area and a trauma center that covers more than 2,200 square miles of south Riverside and north San Diego counties. In addition to three hospitals, Palomar Health offers home health care, surgery, skilled nursing, ambulatory care, behavioral health services, wound care, and community health education programs.

First opening its doors in 1950 as Palomar Memorial Hospital with 37 beds, The Palomar Health Downtown Campus is one of three campuses and specializes in outpatient services for the local community. The facility also provides a standby emergency department for all non-life threatening medical needs, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Bill Watson, interim manager, responsible for facilities operations for Palomar Health Downtown Campus, wanted to renovate the cafeteria and emergency department waiting room to further the health system's goal to provide exceptional healing environments in all of its facilities.

Color and careful plant choices add warmth and privacy

"We recognized that the cafeteria can be an area where families go to relax and reduce anxiety and the emergency room waiting areas can be stressful," said Watson. "Our goal was to use colors and plants to help to create an atmosphere that felt welcoming and safe."

The hospital contacted Janice Nath, design consultant for Ambius in San Diego, to create a plan to achieve this goal. After discussing the hospital's vision with Watson and viewing the cafeteria and waiting room, Nath and the Ambius team designed a project plan that would not only deliver on their vision, but also meet the hospital's limited budget for the project.

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Interim manager, facilities operations

Highlights

- Strategic design creates maximum impact with limited budget
- Varying containers and plants used to create a welcoming environment and a sense of privacy
- Color palette reinforces emotional drivers
- Plantscape Institute of America (PIA) Gold Award



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The cafeteria space was recently painted in bright red, yellow, and green alternating wall colors. "Unfortunately, because it was such a large, open space, it still felt cold. It simply wasn't inviting and offered little sense of privacy for anyone who wanted a moment of peace or a comfortable place to discuss the needs of a loved one over a meal," Watson said.

To design the warm atmosphere the hospital desired, Nath decided to use tall, soft, and lacy plants to create private eating spaces. As you entered the space, three *Zamia Zamifolia* in tall orange cylinders welcomed patrons. *Chamaedorea Seifrizii* palms were chosen because they added the needed height and were perfect for the lighting conditions in the cafeteria. Maintenance could also be scheduled during the least busy times of the day. 24 palms were placed in eight tall cube wall containers that were finished in an orange color complementing the wall color scheme and arranged to create a separation of space in the cafeteria.

Phase two involved transforming the emergency room. "Emergency rooms aren't a place that anyone wants to be in, and the lack of natural light and neutral color pallet of ours made it very stark and a bit depressing," said Watson. The design plan in this space involved adding plants to soften the space. However, the lack of natural light made plant selection critical or challenging. Additionally, careful consideration needed to be given to plant choices because the emergency room was very busy day and night, making time to perform plant maintenance limited.

Creating joy and happiness for greater well being

As with the cafeteria, cube wall containers were used to create a sense of privacy between seating spaces. The containers were strategically placed so that emergency personnel and gurneys could move through the room unhindered, meeting hospital safety codes and patient care requirements. The containers were finished in a yellow color to add warmth. Nine *Sanseveria Laurentii*, two *Zamia Zamifolia*, and three lush *Drac Massangeana* Cane plants were chosen for a modern, stimulating appearance.

"Yellow is associated with joy and happiness. The yellow containers and vibrant plants in the waiting area produce a warming, energetic effect in the emergency room," said Watson. Watson is very pleased with the results of the project. "We have definitely noticed a lift in the emotions of those spending time in the cafeteria and emergency waiting area as a result of the creative plant installations. We are now planning to bring the same creative plant designs to other parts of our hospital. We couldn't be happier with the positive transformation Ambius has brought to these spaces."

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