Portland VA Medical Center Opens New LEED Gold Equivalent Community Based Outpatient Clinic in Bend, Oregon

By Melisse Kuhn, Interior Designer

The Portland VA Medical Center put a new foot forward in its design and construction program in November with the opening of its first new LEED Gold equivalence Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC), now open to patients in Bend, Oregon. Construction of the 22,000 square foot clinic—double the size of the former CBOC—came in response to the growing veteran population in Central Oregon and a need for additional and expanded services. Audiology services, expanded eye services, as well as physical therapy and rehabilitation are now all offered in the new CBOC. The clinic welcomed its first patient November 27th after a year and a half of design, planning, and construction by an integrated design team consisting of VA engineers and biomedical engineers, VA interior design, service chiefs and Bend CBOC Operations Manager alongside private architecture firm, Steele & Associates.

The Bend CBOC remodel hallmarks the latest in a series of CBOC renovations and expansion projects that began in earnest in 2009 with the construction of the Hillsboro CBOC and followed with the opening of the West Linn CBOC and Building 20 in Vancouver, Washington. Guided by Obama’s Executive Order that mandates all new Federal construction on private land meet or exceed LEED Silver Certification Standards, the new Bend CBOC shows the medical center’s dedication to achieving environmental responsibility alongside patient and staff satisfaction in its construction program.

With each new construction project comes the opportunity to pool from our past design and construction experiences and pair those experiences with published research that shows the effects of healthcare design choices. This research, called Evidence Based Design (EBD), guided decisions surrounding the clinic’s floor plan, lighting, finishes and even furniture selection. The palette of materials selected for the project for example—selections based on EBD—are as aesthetically mindful as they are environmentally responsible. Materials are selected to create an environment of care designed to increase patient and staff satisfaction and enhance health. Flooring materials range from Marmoleum that emits...
Omega-3 fatty acids into the air (the flooring actually promotes health!) to carpets and faux wood flooring that are comprised of recycled materials and do not require the use of harsh materials to maintain their appearance and product life. Details such as the twenty-year lease agreement and reuse and renovation of an existing building not only evince fiscal responsibility but also lessen the negative impacts of construction on the environment, namely the debris it creates for local landfills. The result is a clinic that looks and feels more like a place of hospitality such as a hotel rather than the common institutional sterility typical of a medical clinic and serves as a landmark of sustainability in our community.

LEED @ a Glance
How the Bend CBOC achieved LEED Gold Certification Standards

DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION
- Design, planning, and construction done by an integrated team of engineers, designers, contractors, building owners, employees, and veterans.

SITE SELECTION
- Renovated existing building instead of constructing a new building.
- Signed a 20 year lease.
- Clinic is close to public transportation and local restaurants/services for staff and patients.
- Bike parking provided for patients and staff. Shower rooms installed to encourage bike commuting.
- Priority parking designated for fuel efficient vehicles/low emissions vehicles.

ENERGY SAVINGS
- Interior lights are on occupancy sensors.
- Exterior lights are on a timer.
- Public spaces (e.g. waiting rooms) are day-lit.
- Offices have large windows that can light the rooms with natural daylight.

MATERIALS
- Reused ceiling tiles, lighting fixtures, elevator cabs/shafts.
- Used low VOC paint.
- Installed flooring made from natural and recycled materials that do not require harsh chemicals to clean.
- Furniture meets Greenguard Certification standards and is made from recycled materials and is recyclable at the end of its life.
LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) is a holistic building approach, guided by evidence based research that focuses on more than energy efficiency. To earn LEED certification, projects must accumulate a specific number of credits in five areas: sustainability, water efficiency, energy & atmosphere, materials & resources, and indoor environmental quality. Together, these credit areas guide construction and renovation projects that meet a ‘triple bottom line’ benefit: conserving environmental resources, improving the health of building occupants and the environment, and saving taxpayer money.

The Federal Government meets LEED Certification standards/criteria and does not pay the LEED Certification fees to carry the ‘LEED Certification’ of its buildings. The construction of the building and interior still meets the LEED standard; the difference is the cost savings the Federal Government achieves by not paying for the LEED plaque and actual certification of its buildings.