

Just the Facts

WYNN HOSPITAL

Each week, "Just the Facts" provides information about a key aspect of the Wynn Hospital being built by Mohawk Valley Health System (MVHS). It is designed to keep our medical staff, employees and volunteers updated and to share with family, friends and neighbors so we keep our community informed about how we're transforming healthcare in our region.



TOPIC FOR TUESDAY, MAY 2, 2023:

What can we learn from the construction of the Wynn Hospital?

By Keith Leal, Upstate New York Business Leader, Gilbane Building Company

For just the [third time in the last half-century](#), a new hospital in upstate New York is being [built from the ground up](#) – and it is the first to be constructed almost entirely during the pandemic, despite the considerable challenges presented by that global public health crisis.

When the Mohawk Valley Health System (MVHS) and Gilbane Building Company initially broke ground on the new Wynn Hospital in December 2019, we had no idea that COVID-19 would dramatically elevate the need for modern healthcare facilities. Nor did we know how the pandemic would dramatically impact the construction industry, upend project timelines, exacerbate a long-standing labor shortage, and cause an acute shortage of materials.

In that tumultuous first year of construction, some questioned whether the new hospital would be ready on time. Now, as we enter the [final phase of construction](#) ahead of an anticipated August completion, our team, including architect NBBJ and project manager, Hammes, is poised to deliver MVHS a new hospital, both [on time and on budget](#).

This feat, which once seemed impossible, was realized as the result of innovative construction practices that can model for other developments across New York and the nation.

At the core of the project's innovation was the use of prefabricated modular construction tools, which helped mitigate pandemic-related capacity risks, including onsite labor and material supply. For example, patient bathrooms in the hospital's new patient tower were designed to be built offsite, meet feasibility requirements, and then subsequently installed in Utica.

We did this with no fewer than 325 patient bathrooms – some standard, and others specially designed to meet the unique needs of facilities in the Intensive Care Unit and Psychiatric Unit. The bathrooms were largely prefabricated and sent to Utica for final installation.

This tactic helped save both time and money without sacrificing quality. Using traditional methods of construction, each bathroom would have required 200 total trade hours to finalize. With the modular approach, by contrast, each bathroom took just 10 hours per unit, which reduced the fit-out of a given patient room by 25 percent.

Similar successes were realized through a prefabricated modular steel framework for the hospital's stairs and elevator shafts, which limited worker risk and ensured greater consistency; pre-assembled doors and hardware across the site; and prefabricated stud-frame headwalls to reduce the amount of hot work required in the field.

These examples are just a few of the multiple innovative techniques employed throughout the life of this project, which helped Gilbane and MVHS work efficiently, safely, and productively – even in the face of the shutdowns, labor shortages, and supply chain challenges caused by the pandemic.

The result will be transformative for Utica and the surrounding region. The Wynn Hospital will soon include a 373-bed, 690,000-square-foot modern facility in the heart of the city's downtown, where it will provide state-of-the-art working conditions for healthcare workers and improve patient care.

The new space will also allow MVHS to cultivate, train, and prepare the next generation of healthcare professionals – essential frontline workers, whose work has become even more critical over the past several years – through an expanded Graduate Medical Education division that includes partnerships with two Medical Schools and the addition of five new residencies, with a sixth in progress, that builds upon the two existing MVHS residency programs.

The work that brought this important project to fruition underscored the need for our industry to embrace innovation and exemplifies what can be achieved with great collaboration, partnership and exceptional support from a project owner like MVHS. Our workers' and partners' willingness to innovate on the Wynn Hospital demonstrates that when we think outside the box, we can overcome significant adversity. The proof is in a new hospital that will be the pride of Utica, providing high-quality care for patients and anchoring the local economy for years to come.