

Now is the Time for Planning

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By Deborah J. Hodges

There will be a lot of pent up demand once the economy returns to a more positive level. Are you thinking about facility planning and how you will manage it? It's coming. You can use this time wisely by planning your facilities now to better position yourself to capitalize on the healthier economy when it arrives and to seize a strategic advantage.

The purpose of facilities planning is to programmatically confirm what is working, what to keep, and it is a good time to define areas that are not working well. It is easy to complain or state what is not working. The successful teams ask why it is not working and find a solution to correct it. There are no quick fixes. By taking the time to plan your facility and develop a good hospital planning roadmap now, you are avoiding failures. It will also move you closer to a more robust, affordable facility.

"Taking the time now to address hospital facilities planning is important for at least three reasons, they are: 1) capturing a strategic advantage 2) identifying the right people to be involved in making the decisions before you begin the planning process, and 3) being prepared with a plan. So often, this is rushed because there is an urgency to proceed. Why not take the time now to build a strong position for yourself?" said William W. Heun, AIA, partner at Matthei & Colin Associates.

Facility planning begins with a strategic plan and it is closely followed with a master plan. The strategic plan identifies opportunities and threats. The master plan identifies and catalogs the changes that are needed and/or desired. It is the map of the tactical response with which to support or realize the strategic plan over a period of time. It is essential to evaluate costs, risks, and conduct a statistical analysis with key executives and clinicians to gain the fullest advantages.

"St. Joseph's Regional Medical Center took the time to create a plan early and it helped us achieve what we were looking for in new design and construction. You know earlier facility planning is part of the secret to a better facility and often it is delayed." said Lori Price, executive vice president of the Plymouth campus at St. Joseph's Regional Medical Center, Plymouth, Indiana. "It was better for us to take the time to plan and avoid risks, complaints, and failures. We wanted to have 20/20 vision." she added.

The development process of the facility master plan must include if/then analyses and diagrammatic responses. The team or committee makes decisions-not one group of stakeholders. It is vital to take the time to do this step well. After the decisions are made, they are master-priced, present-valued on assumptions or mapped out. Finally, it is phased with options of how to proceed with the facility. Then, the team determines how they want to proceed at this point. This next step involves discussing more options, developing a hypothetical project timeline, and determining if it can be actualized. The decision to proceed with programming is a cultural one. Some hospitals want to use this time to conduct detailed programming since it gives them more time to work with everyone and other hospitals may want to wait.

Chicago Hospital News[®]

THE REGION'S MONTHLY HEALTHCARE NEWSPAPER

William Heun shared some critical questions for planning that are useful and an important part of a customized approach to project planning.

10 Critical Questions that Executives Should Ask

1. Who are the authoritative decision makers in the final decision?
2. Who needs to be involved-right people?
3. How far do you want to go in the planning process?
4. What are the priorities in nursing models-centralized vs. pods?
5. What are the supporting staff models-silos or multi-specialty team-assigned units?
6. What is the level (degree) of digital information management?
7. What is the desired image for family and patient environments?
8. What is the preferred medication delivery-physical system and documentation?
9. What is the flow of materials from entering the hospital to exiting at the soiled dock area?
10. How do you see modeling the culture in built space?

In the end, facility planning avoids unnecessary “undoing” later. Take the time now to clearly define goals when there is less pressure to do it. The result is fewer errors. Mistakes can be avoided that often have a tragic lasting effect in cost and time. Use this down time in the economy to create an advantage for your hospital with strategic planning and master planning. We don't know if there will be a slow or quick recovery; however, you can gain several months or years advantage now-a strategic advantage-and be prepared for what's coming.

William W. Heun, AIA, Partner, Matthei Colin & Associates, can be reached at williamh@mca-architecture.com or (312) 939-4002.