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Designing Outside the Box: Medical Office Building Trends and Considerations

By Ron Menze, AIA, ACHA, EDAC
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MKM architecture + design has recently completed the White County Hospital Medical Office Building, which is connected to their new replacement hospital in Monticello, Indiana. Also completed are two medical office buildings on the Elm Road campus in Mishawaka, Indiana. The buildings are South Bend Orthopaedics and Medical Office Building Two, which is a multi-tenant facility with St. Joseph Regional Medical Center, South Bend as the primary tenant.

Designing Outside of the Box: Medical Office Building Trends and Considerations

Once a physician group or hospital concludes that a new medical office or addition is necessary, the decision making can quickly become overwhelming. Having a single practice in a building may seem ideal; however, cost, financial responsibility, and patient access issues can quickly overrule this ideal. An Architects can help guide these decisions. Some question when to involve a planner in the process. Architects can start making recommendations as early as the client wishes, even with decisions about the size of property required and the property selection. If the architect is hired after these

initial decisions are made the building design may be compromised.

Once an architect or contractor is hired, contractual relationships are important in determining the scope of work. To learn more about common American Institute of Architects contracts visit www.aia.org/docs.

One of the first design decisions is to determine if the building will be for a single practice or multiple tenant building. Multiple tenant buildings in medical office parks continue as a popular trend. Practices are then able to refer patients to one another. It is important to have buildings that visually complement one other, but with a unique look for each building for patient orientation. Design flexibility is considered for potential additions. Smart design is buildings designed with the future in mind.



Figure 1: South Bend Orthopaedics, Mishawaka, IN

Pre-selected color and material palettes are suggested. This allows tenants to customize their spaces instead of allowing complete design freedom. The medical office buildings should allow a variety of divisible areas and room layouts for tenant flexibility. Front lobby access is most coveted by tenants, so designs that provide more lobby front doors, along with ample natural lighting are most attractive to tenants. A second entrance/exit is required in most physician suites for staff access and as a privacy exit for patients if needed. A canopy over the front door is a needed amenity to consider when determining the facility budget, along with accessible parking on an adjacent front sidewalk.

Building ownership or medical park covenants come into play with practice-owned versus hospital-owned medical office buildings. This includes whether to restrict tenants that may compete with other tenants or practices in the medical office park. Decisions on what physician market segment to attract must be made.

Hospital-owned medical offices attached to the hospital is the trend. This provides convenient patient access without the hospital having to house all services. Areas of hospital administration or support cost less to build and operate in a medical office. This can also keep the Medicare ratio of square footage more advantageous. Another benefit of having an MOB and hospital building is a stronger visual image as one approaches. Shared visiting physician suites are also a cost-effective consideration for hospital-owned MOB's in attracting new practices into the region.



Figure 2: IU Health White Memorial MOB, Monticello, IN

More than Just Drawings

There is the common misconception that architects just do the drawings. However, architects commonly provide planning services to help determine what spaces and sizes are required. Simple planning, with single line blocking diagrams can be done to help groups determine how much acreage a freestanding building may require. Once land is selected, Morrison Kattman Menze can provide land rezoning assistance and guidance. Space planning for tenants is a common service, along with interior design. It is common to hire an architect simply for planning services, with no obligation beyond. The first consultation to discuss your space needs with MKM is always free.

About the Author:



Ron Menze, AIA, ACHA, EDAC

Ron's professional planning experience includes several regional and industry leading healthcare providers, including two "Top 100" facilities. He has extensive experience with Joint Commission surveys, Department of Health requirements, and Building Code requirements for hospitals and medical office occupancies. He attained membership in the American College of Healthcare Architects, one of only 330+ architects in the United States. Additionally, Ron became one of only three Indiana architects to achieve Evidence-Based Design Accreditation and Certification (EDAC).