



Gaston Memorial Hospital, Gastonia, NC

nora[®] Floors Care for Patients and Staff at Gaston Memorial

Gaston Memorial Hospital is a busy place. The 435-bed facility in Gastonia, NC, anchors CaroMont Health, an independent, non-for-profit healthcare system that delivers state-of-the-art healthcare to Gastonia and the southwest Piedmont area. The 25-year-old structure also finds itself in the midst of a number of renovation projects that require flexibility on the part of hospital staff as they continue to provide numerous inpatient and outpatient services while construction proceeds around them.

According to Jennifer Tuttle, IIDA, director of interior design at RPA Design, P.C., Charlotte, NC, RPA has completed more than 24 projects at the hospital during the past three years, including changes to the dialysis, physical therapy, neurology, day of surgery and emergency department psych units as well as the radiology and fluoroscopy room, emergency department and patient tower. To date, more than 90,000 square feet of floor coverings from nora systems, Inc. have been installed as part of these projects, and Tuttle expects to specify additional nora[®] products as the hospital's renovation continues.

noraplan[®] mega is the product of choice for the hospital, providing ergonomic benefits to the staff at Gaston Memorial. "For both patients and staff, the ergonomics of the floor are phenomenal," Tuttle explained. "The staff at the hospital stand on this floor for 12-hour shifts, so the fact that the nora floor offers a soft surface to stand on is important and helps to prevent back, leg and foot problems."

Jim Plummer, director of facilities at the hospital, agreed, saying, "The floor has a little bit of give to it, making it easier on the feet. Quite frankly, I think that's the biggest benefit the floor offers. Compared to harder floor surfaces, it also delivers some nice acoustical benefits, helping to deaden the sound on patient floors."

In addition to the resiliency of the floor covering and its acoustical properties, the product's ease of maintenance also appealed to hospital staff as they considered floor covering choices. All nora products feature a dense, nonporous surface that eliminates the need for waxing or sealing, along with the harsh chemicals associated with these processes. According to



Tuttle, "The fact that you don't need to wax the floor means that costs to maintain the flooring decrease, and the floor is resistant to many of the stains common to a hospital setting."

The designer is quick to point out that the performance of nora products does not come at the expense of good design. noraplan mega features flecks and clusters of color that create a three-dimensional pattern in a large range of colors. "The color choices are good," said Tuttle. "In fact, between the performance properties of nora floor coverings and the color choices that are available, a designer should be able to find a product that enhances any project he or she is working on."

At Gaston Memorial, Tuttle chose a color palette that combines one neutral color and four accent colors to form curves and flowing organic patterns on each floor. "We knew going into this project that renovations were going to occur floor by floor, so we decided to incorporate a way-finding mechanism for visitors," explained Tuttle. "We identified each floor of the hospital by an accent color so that visitors stepping off an elevator are greeted by a neutral nora product (that is repeated on every level) and an accent color unique to that floor that appears in the floor pattern and on walls."

According to Tuttle, the colors that were selected and the patterns that were created benefit patients just as much as the floor's performance properties benefit staff. In the recently renovated dialysis unit, for example, the floor patterns are intended to create a calming, relaxing space. "The folks that use this area sit there for long periods of time as they undergo dialysis, and there are no windows in the unit," said Tuttle. "So, we tried to create floor patterns that resemble a flowing river and create a soothing and comfortable space."

Similarly, in the neurology unit, Tuttle used soft, flowing curves, "...because neurology patients need a calm, serene environment that isn't too stimulating." The floor covering's smooth, non-glare finish also contributes to the aesthetically soothing visual effect.

The only place where Tuttle strayed from a curvilinear design is on the pediatric and adolescent wing of the psychiatric unit. There, the floor design incorporates games, including checker boards and cutouts in a design that designates the location of bowling pins. Young patients can use large playing pieces and bowling pins and balls to entertain themselves during their hospital stay. "The floor actually provides activities to keep kids busy and focused in a bright, colorful way." Tuttle said.

The versatility of the nora product is evident as visitors to the hospital move from designs that feature game boards to others that depict curves and waves. But in every case, the performance properties so important to Gaston Memorial – comfort underfoot, sound absorption and ease of maintenance – remain intact, ensuring comfort to staff and the patients in their care.

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