

Pensacola medical facility panels reflect seaside vibe

Originally opened to the public in 1951, Baptist Hospital in Pensacola, Fla., is a community staple and the only locally based, not-for-profit hospital in the city. After more than 70 years of service, Baptist Health Care officials began planning efforts for a new campus that would include an updated hospital and an expansive outpatient facility known as the Bear Family Foundation Health Center.

The Bear Health Center encompasses 178,000 ft² (16,500 m²) across six floors and offers a wide range of patient services, including oncology, women’s health, bariatrics, cardiology, and more. Skip Yauger, senior vice president at project architect Gresham Smith, says the exterior design focused on a combination of durability and striking visuals.

Yauger says that the Gresham Smith team performed ample research in generating its design, asking the medical staff what would resonate with them. Responses consistently referenced Pensacola’s landscapes, beaches, and historic context, ultimately leading the architects to select precast concrete as the building material of choice.

Clay Hudson, project manager for GATE Precast, said that more than 40,000 ft² (3700 m²) of precast concrete was manufactured for the Bear Health Center project. The GATE team

produced two different types of panels: traditional architectural precast concrete for the podium and GateLite, a unitized, lightweight system, for the remaining exterior. By using this combination of panels, the Bear Health Center can withstand a category 5 hurricane while simultaneously boasting a design motif that is reflective of the surrounding natural environment.

“Precast’s resiliency and its ability to enhance speed of construction were major factors in us positively impacting this project,” Hudson says. “Our team was tasked with providing a repeating pattern of different finishes—brush blast, light blast, medium blast, and honed—and they knocked it out of the park, ensuring the right finishes were in the right locations.”

As you look at the building, intricate detailing in the precast concrete panels signifies the complexity and granularity evident in a Pensacola-area beach scene. But as you move your eyes up toward the windows, the scene becomes more expansive, much like where the horizon line meets the sky. Beyond this, the Bear Health Center also pays homage to the original hospital using precast concrete designed to look like terracotta, which was a major part of the 1951 structure’s design.

“I was a strong advocate for precast concrete from the beginning of the project,” Yauger says. “Precast gave us the flexibility to create a captivating and resilient exterior finish. The interest that you get with the different colors and textures in the panels is extremely effective.”

—Mason Nichols

The Bear Family Foundation Health Center in Pensacola, Fla., incorporates medical staff input into the design with precast concrete panels designed to withstand a category 5 hurricane. Courtesy of Chad Baumer Photography.



Prominent Navy Yard structure shows off with textured panels

For nearly 250 years, the Philadelphia Navy Yard in Pennsylvania has played a critical role in American history. The site, which is located on 1200 acres (4.9 square km) along the Delaware River, served as the birthplace of the U.S. Navy, spurred local residential and commercial development over decades of American growth, and was critical in producing and repairing ships deployed during World War II.

Today, the Navy Yard continues to support innovation and advancement, offering flexible spaces and opportunities for a business community of 15,000 employees and 150 employers. One of the most recent additions to the Navy Yard is 2500 League Island Boulevard, a 130,000 ft² (1200 m²), state-of-the-art flex production building constructed with 172 precast concrete panels.

The structure boasts high visibility due to its proximity to nearby Interstate 95. In addition, it's one of the first buildings seen when entering the Philadelphia Navy Yard. As such, aesthetics was a key consideration in the building's design.

"It was important for 2500 League Island Boulevard to stand out from the gray ships that are in the background, along with the industrial buildings that have been there for

decades," says Andrew Ferrarelli, studio director for architect SITIO.


Bill Hydock, preconstruction manager with Universal Concrete Products, says that a high degree of collaboration and open communication lines among all parties involved led to an innovative panelization approach on the project.

"We manufactured four unique forms that randomly combine to provide the intended design effect while maximizing production efficiency," he says. "The use of various formliner areas and textures further added to the building's unique appearance."

Ferrarelli echoes Hydock, noting that SITIO's architects visited the Universal Concrete Products plant to review elevations and determine the best possible panel approach for the building's design. The result is 77,500 ft² (7200 m²) of precast concrete that functions both as a load-bearing facade and an eye-catching exterior for businesses operating within the space.

"This building is over 800 feet long, which presented a challenge," Ferrarelli says. "But the team put in ample effort to ensure the exterior didn't feel like one long, homogenous surface."

With a strong presence and a resilient facility made possible by precast concrete, 2500 League Island Boulevard plays a critical role in the continued resurgence of the Philadelphia Navy Yard, building on a history that's defined by strength, fortitude, and a dedication to continued evolution.

—Mason Nichols 

The structure at 2500 League Island Boulevard, a 130,000 ft² (1200 m²), state-of-the-art flex production building constructed with 172 precast concrete panels, is a recent addition to the Philadelphia Navy Yard in Pennsylvania. Courtesy of Sitio-Halkin Mason Photography.

