

# Planning for Flexibility

On a day-to-day basis, physicians face many challenges in today's healthcare marketplace: changes in reimbursement, increase share of ancillaries, mergers, new technological advances physician recruitment, just to name a few. BBL Medical Facilities (BBL) takes these concerns and issues into consideration as we develop new medical office buildings (MOB) and office suites for doctors -- and -- create their 'plans-for-the-future'.

During a MOB's initial planning stages, BBL develops a Space Program, which is a room-by-room tabulation of needs, requirements and desires. We carefully analyze the clinical-aspects of the physicians' practice-disciplines looking for common elements that can be repeated throughout a new facility. Developing a building program in this fashion embraces Planning for Flexibility.

BBL initiates the design process with the basic examination room arrangement or cluster. We look for different types of spaces that compliment this exam-group and expand outward. BBL designs from the inside, where the patient first meets with, or encounters the physician, and then we move-out. Our goal is to develop a user-friendly conceptual design featuring work and patient flow patterns that could be duplicated throughout the facility.

In each planning effort, BBL establishes a common practice exam module, or pod, and links these clusters together with adjacent pods. If the practice of one pod needed to expand, it could capture the adjacent pod with very little remodeling; and, since the pod was set-up similarly, gutting the adjacent space and reconstructing it would be avoided. This gives administration and leadership flexibility when planning for the group's future and addressing its needs.

Of course, capturing an adjacent pod means facility growth; and from a land use perspective, good site master planning always permits full land utilization so that a future addition could be easily accomplished. However, what is often overlooked is the internal expansion.

BBL advocates using identical clinic module dimensions for the arrangement of adjacent 'soft-spaces'. Then, these soft areas could be easily converted into clinical spaces to address future needs. This also helps to keep the practice up and operational during the renovation process. Areas such as billing, administration, medical records, and storage are easy targets for relocation in an internal expansion effort.

Lastly, we look for the strategic placement of the practice's 'hard-spaces', which could potentially block future growth of the clinical-disciplines. Examples of these would be imaging, laboratory and I.T. From the onset, these spaces are very expensive to build and are seldom displaced and built-new in an expansion effort. Designing one hard-space adjacent to another is a no-no, as the hard ones may also need to grow.

Following these simple space planning guidelines will result in a cost-effective, operationally-efficient, and well planned medical facility that will be a tool for a physician to practice and flourish from day one with flexibility built in to 'plan-for-the-future'.