

PRINT-Expanded ICU at OSF St. Joseph enhances critical care for the region

As part of its continued investment in Central Illinois, OSF HealthCare has blessed a newly renovated 18,000-square-foot space at OSF St. Joseph Medical Center, located at 2200 E Washington Street in Bloomington.

The \$17.8 million project will add 25 new intensive care unit (ICU) rooms, more than doubling the hospital's ICU capacity from 14 to 29 beds.

The modernized space features a centralized and expanded care team hub, designed for efficient patient monitoring and quick access to patient rooms. Attention to detail was a priority in both function and aesthetics.

Pointcore Construction Program Manager Jordan Sondag notes that ergonomic design and nurse and provider input guided placement of bedside utilities like oxygen and IV hookups, as well as nurse documentation stations with dimmer switches for lights and room-facing windows for better patient visibility.

"The finish selections and paint colors are soothing and healing," said Sondag. "This space reflects our commitment to compassionate, high-quality care – and we want patients to feel that from the moment they walk in."

The expansion repurposes the former Center for Healthy Lifestyles and incorporates space from an adjacent courtyard. The relocation of the ICU will allow OSF HealthCare in the future to construct a new patient tower which will add 60-65 additional private beds.

Sondag also said one of the biggest challenges was adapting the design to the hospital's existing structural grid, which required extensive excavation and reinforcement to support the new infrastructure and equipment.

Eunmee (UHN-mee) Shim, OSF HealthCare St. Joseph Medical Center president, says the transformation is part of a larger strategy to allow OSF St. Joseph Medical Center to be a regional referral center. Over the last few years, the hospital has been forced to deny hundreds of incoming patient transfers from smaller community hospitals due to being at capacity, making the expansion project key in serving surrounding rural communities.

"They're losing a lot of services, so as a regional referral center, we will be receiving a lot more patients; many of them can't get the care they need in their own community therefore likely they will be delaying care and presenting themselves much sicker."

McLean County's population is growing rapidly, driven in part by expanding local industries such as the Rivian auto plant and the recent opening of Ferrero's candy factory in Bloomington – both of which are increasing demand for health care services. Additionally, Shim points out OSF St. Joseph will be offering a more comprehensive range of care and is expanding its number of providers to meet the evolving needs for convenient specialty care.

"We will be adding complexity of patients because we're adding more complex services and bringing additional providers with specialties that we have not had before and all of that will require us to have bigger and better prepared critical care beds."

OSF St. Joseph currently offers a wide range of services such as cancer care, pregnancy and birthing, emergency services, heart and vascular care, neurosurgery, and more.

Hayley Aeschleman, manager of ICU, step-down and centralized telemetry, says the location of the new ICU is better for patient privacy and safety.

"We are right across the hall from the operating room, which is really exciting, especially when you have patients who might need emergent surgery. Sometimes you're just really prepping them for surgery and then sometimes actually running that patient to the OR from ICU to make sure we can give them care they need to save their life. So, now instead of going across the hospital, we'll be just literally right across the hall, which is super exciting."

Courtney Bier (BEER), director of inpatient nursing services, said nurses and managers provided important input about room layout and features needed to meet the demands of caring for sicker patients with more complex health challenges. For example, when the project started, there was not a lift in every patient room.

"Throughout the design process, getting feedback from other leaders; from critical Mission Partners (employees), we realized how important it was to have those lifts both for the patient safety as well as for the Mission Partners' safety because again, our patients are sicker. They're able to do a lot less for themselves and we need to keep our Mission Partners safe while also making sure we're meeting our patients' needs."

Telehealth technology is being integrated into the new ICU rooms to accommodate tele intensivists and additional monitoring from OSF OnCall, the digital health arm of OSF HealthCare with a centralized command center in Peoria, Illinois. Bier says each ICU room is equipped with a monitor and camera. As former night shift nurses, both Bier and Aeschleman say the extra support is comforting.

"We find OSF OnCall so valuable, especially in the ICU – sometimes it's just another set of eyes like, 'Hey, I need a second opinion – there's not another person available on the unit' – and so I'm very excited we have that capability."

Shim says the expansion is requiring nearly doubling the number of providers and support staff, such as patient care techs and certified nursing assistants. It has resulted in hiring many new graduate nurses and a total of 100 new full-time Mission Partners. The changes also put OSF St. Joseph Medical Center on track to transition the hospital to all private patient rooms.