



FEATURED SUSTAINABLE PROJECT



GREEN EDUCATION TOPIC



WHAT YOU CAN DO

## 1 Featured Sustainable Project: Scottsdale Healthcare Master Color Palette Standards

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Orcutt|Winslow is currently working with Scottsdale Healthcare to update the organization's master color and finish standards. One of the first topics of discussion with all of our clients involves determining the level of priority they'd like to place on sustainable design practices. Scottsdale Healthcare, with the guidance of an internal committee focused on green practices, has made a commitment to the specification of materials that both create a healthy environment for users and also have minimal negative impact on the environment as a whole. Scottsdale Healthcare is especially in favor of selecting products with a high percent of recycled content that can also be recycled at the end of their lifecycle. We're placing additional emphasis on using PVC-free and formaldehyde-free materials for better indoor air quality.

Our Interior Design studio is conducting detailed research on various product options for Scottsdale Healthcare, referencing guidelines and technical briefs provided by the Green Guide for Healthcare™ and the international coalition Health Care Without Harm. We are exploring the various PVC-free products currently on the market, including acoustical ceiling tile, carpet, resilient flooring, wall and corner guards, wall coverings, window coverings, furniture, and fabrics. We are reviewing information regarding whether the product has undergone IAQ testing, whether it uses halogenated flame retardant, whether perfluorinated (stain resistant) chemicals or anti-microbial treatments are a part of the finished product, and information about recycled content.

At project completion, Orcutt|Winslow will present Scottsdale Healthcare with new standards that meet the organization's aesthetic and budgetary requirements, creating a healthier indoor environment and minimizing negative impact on the global environment.

## 2 Green Healthcare Facilities From An Interiors Standpoint

Although the focus of this article is the interior designer's standpoint of designing a green building, it must be stated that first and foremost, designing a green building is a team effort. From architect to contractor to interior designer to consultants to client to facility managers and end users, all must be on board to create and maintain the green effort during and after project completion. If even one group is not on board, the project's success in sustainability can be compromised.

Designing for a healthcare project has a set of requirements that requires research on the designer's part and decisions on the client's part in evaluating sustainable goals. This involves engaged conversations on functionality, ease of operations and life cycle costs.

### Examples of Finish Selections in Healthcare Facilities

**Natural Wallcovering:** Wallcovering manufacturers' first approach to the green effort is to provide options made of natural and non-toxic materials such as grass, hemp, seeds and corn husks. However, these products cannot hold up to the washable, scrubbable requirements needed in an operating room or even a lobby—a more suited area for the finish, but where public abuse can and will inevitably take place. It's vinyl relative (which is more scrubbable/washable) can bring aesthetics to a lobby or waiting room, but is most commonly made of PVC, Polyvinyl Chloride, a product known to cause a range of health hazards during its production and lifecycle use, and hence is not green. Wallcovering manufacturers have been looking into ways to create wallcovering that is PVC-free yet still as durable as PVC. They are also working on recycling options for their current products.

**WOOD SHEET VINYL:** Designers dislike using faux materials, but sometimes their use provides the perfect compromise between design aesthetic and functional needs. Wood patterned sheet flooring provides the warmth and a residential feel perfect to make patients in recovery feel more at home while recuperating, yet is easily cleaned by the facility management staff. Though most products are made of PVC, there are ready-to-specify products now available such as Ceres's Sequoia PVC-free plank flooring that provides greener flooring solutions in healthcare facilities.

**LINOLEUM:** Linoleum is a natural finish often used in healthcare facilities due to its hypoallergenic qualities and long lasting properties if maintained well. However, it emits a smell that sometimes can be mistaken as toxic and can be uncomfortable to some. Also, since most of it is made in Europe, it is not a local product in the US and therefore loses some credibility as a sustainable choice for US projects.

**CARPET:** Soft surface flooring often gets a bad rap in terms of cleaning and dirt collection. But sometimes providing a place for dust to fall and cling to versus a constant movement up off of a hard surface floor helps keep potentially unhealthy germs away, at least temporarily. As published by Shaw Industries, Inc. in "Carpet and the Indoor Environment", "EPA scientists have concluded that carpet can be beneficial in trapping and immobilizing potential allergy-causing particulates, preventing them from reentering the air stream, if the carpet is properly cleaned and maintained." This makes carpet a good choice for lobby and waiting areas of healthcare facilities, where it can hold dirt until routine maintenance occurs.



### Some of the more pertinent interior healthcare project requirements are:

- Using products that can hold up to heavy duty use and abuse, that are long lasting, seamless, and deter dirt and bacteria growth.
- Using products that are washable and scrubbable, that can be cleaned easily with cleaning solutions that range from low to high toxicity.

### Designing For Whom?

When designing for healthcare projects, the patient is the focus of the design, with the staff often neglected. This doesn't—and shouldn't—have to be the case. It is a priority to create a comfortable patient experience to increase patient draw and retention, but good designers realize that staff retention and satisfaction is equally important. One of the goals should be to create a space that is functional and inviting as well as healthy for those staying and working in the facility.

In the end, the practice of green healthcare is still in its infancy. Creating a green healthcare facility is a team effort and requires more collaboration between all parties, including product manufacturers. We are closer than ever before to creating places that are healthy and green in every way and should do all we can do to ensure that green design is not an add-on component of design but instead is simply recognized as good design.

## 3 What You Can Do

- Use products that are made of recycled, recyclable after end use, natural and/or sustainable materials that are derived from managed forests and emit little or no VOCs (Volatile Organic Compounds).
- Use products that can be cleaned with natural cleaning solutions.
- Use manufacturers that provide green products and also engage in sustainable practices.