At the turn of the 21st Century, the Oregon State Hospital in Salem was ready for some tender, loving care. The “Cuckoo’s Nest” of book and movie notoriety, which was born as an Insane Asylum in the Victorian age, was now overcrowded and under-resourced. In October 2007, the state commissioned architectural firm HOK, along with SRG Partnership, Inc., to design a 620-bed secure hospital. The State’s 2005 master plan was to replace it with buildings that reflected new thinking in mental health treatment. Patients would live in “houses,” grouped in “neighborhoods,” with central spaces for socializing, recreation and dining. A “treatment mall” would offer therapy and life skills, ranging from personal hygiene to computer work, to aid patients in recovery and their transition back to the community.

In 2008 when the entire campus on both sides of Center Street was added to the National Register of Historic Places, the plans had to change. The 1883 Kirkbride Building, with its signature cupola, as well as other smaller historical buildings, were now to be incorporated into the new hospital.

**HOFFMAN BUILDS:**

A model of new thinking in mental health treatment

**Owners:** Oregon Health Authority  **Owners Rep:** CH2M Hill  **Design Team:** HOK (principal), SRG Partnership, Walker Macy, KPFF Consulting Engineers  **Construction Cost:** $311,000,000  **Square Footage:** 636,000  **Number of Beds:** 620  **Completion Date:** December 2011  **Location:** Salem, Oregon
“We were in the programming phase and had to change midstream,” said Steve Riley, an architect at HOK of San Francisco, a firm with experience building psychiatric and general hospitals. A highly responsive team effort managed the sudden change of plans. “Hoffman was always solution-based and quick to rectify anything brought before them,” said Jodie Jones of the Oregon Health Authority, who succeeded Linda Hammond as Project Administrator in December 2011. “[Superintendent] Mike Erdman did everything to make the project meet the owners’ expectations. I don’t know how - I just told Mike what I wanted and he made it happen!”

For HOK and SRG, program dictated form. “The owner talked a lot about making it less institutional, so we tried to make it more hospitality-based,” said Riley, who drew upon ideas from hospitals, hotels and even spas. “The focus was on both safety and security.” For instance, in the high security unit, each patient room was designed with its own bathroom, but with curtains rather than solid doors. “It shows the delicate balance of patient privacy versus security.”

Historic Kirkbride Building with its signature cupola

Work on the active Oregon State Hospital required intense safety planning
Work on the active Oregon State Hospital required intense safety planning.

Removing the Cupola for restoration.

The Cupola was restored on the ground to increase safety and efficiency.
Preparing one part of the building while keeping others operational was a challenge. For example, some of the Bridges residents live in cottages on the hospital campus, which were remodeled as ADA-accessible group homes. Hoffman hired MWESB firms as General Contractors and renovated the cottages early in the project. This provided space for patients to move into, so their existing buildings could be demolished.

“It was like a big chess game,” said Dan Dowell, Project Manager with CH2M HILL and the owner’s representative. “From the owner’s perspective it was unclear how [the phasing] would work. The project was first presented to us as impossible. But as a team we kept figuring out solutions.” For example, Dowell says, the cottages saved time and money. “Instead of paying for a temporary structure that the State would get no long-term benefit from, they now have the cottages in use for 36 transitional patients, and the size of the new hospital and the size of the hospital was reduced by 36 beds.”

Hoffman’s two biggest challenges were the phasing and the mechanical portion of the work. The Central Utility Plant (CUP), which provides steam heat for buildings on both sides
of Center Street, was kept up and running until an entire temporary utility system could be designed and built.

A new kitchen capable of feeding 600 people three times a day was constructed in the space where the old CUP was, and replaced the old kitchen without missing a meal. When it came to relocation, the ABC (Admissions, Behavioral and Corrections) patients were moved into their new, high security unit early on. As one new building was completed, another one fell, and patients found a new home.

Stakeholder input was important to the process. For instance, early in the design, the nurses union advocated for four foot wide doors rather than three foot wide ones, so they could access rooms in pairs. This meant the halls had to be eight feet rather than six feet wide. Hoffman helped accommodate the design change and finished the work on time.

“The project has worked out fabulously,” said Jodie Jones of the Oregon Health Authority. “Hoffman has been one of those dream companies to work with. Everyone has been extremely courteous – they all stepped up to the plate and have gone over and above what we asked of them, despite all obstacles.”

“**Our mission is to provide therapeutic, evidence-based, patient-centered treatment focusing on recovery and community reintegration all in a safe environment.**”

OSH website
MORE THAN JUST A FACELIFT

The restored Kirkbride is now home to administration as well as the “Downtown” with a café and a store selling crafts made by patients. Downtown is also home to unique treatment spaces such as the gym, hair salon, and art therapy room. Access is a privilege earned during recovery.

The Kirkbride has been excavated, shored up, rewired, refaced, reroofed and reglazed. Hoffman removed the delicate wood cupola by crane, restored it to its Victorian glory and put it back. The seismic plans called for the stone foundation to be replaced with cast-in-place concrete, but during preconstruction Hoffman worked with the A&E team to come up with a better solution. The foundation’s walls received six inches of shotcrete, saving two months on the schedule and $1 million. Getting approval to use double pane glass in the restored historic windows eliminated interior storm windows, saving over $800,000.

With its Downtown, the Kirkbride now embodies new thinking about the treatment of mental illness. Patients are encouraged to take small measures of responsibility and steps towards their eventual independence. As OSH’s web site puts it:

“Our mission is to provide therapeutic, evidence-based, patient-centered treatment focusing on recovery and community reintegration all in a safe environment.”

SRG Partnership was the Pacific Northwest-based partner in the Design team. HOK had the primary design responsibility for the overall project and specifically for new construction. SRG played lead roles on permitting and regulatory issues, coordinating site activities and the very complex renovation of the historic Kirkbride building. In addition, SRG was the lead for the design team during the construction phase, working in collaboration with Hoffman, HOK and many other design consultants.

“A lot of renovations require thoughtful phasing, but what was unique about this was its size, its complexity and its aggressive schedule,” said SRG Principal Dennis Cusack, who was Principal-in-Charge of SRG’s role in the project. “From the beginning we had extensive discussions about how to replace or renovate almost one million square feet and deal with the fact that there are over 600 patients on site.”

Then there was the historic component, which was just emerging when design started.

“There was a lot of public involvement in that process. Some people had a tremendous attachment to the old building. The result is a contemporary hospital which strongly reflects its remarkable 125-plus year history,” Cusack said. “The team took on a challenge that people didn’t know quite how to resolve. When you get a design team, a contractor, a supportive owner and engaged community working in collaboration, you can come up with some remarkable things – and we did.”

The Kirkbride’s Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing (MEP) was Hoffman’s second big challenge. “Wires were just strung along the basement walls like spaghetti,” said Hoffman’s Cade Lawrence, the Project Director. The team found the data line for the Oregon Lottery running through the basement, and the Internet connection for the state penitentiary next door.

“Hoffman led a team of subcontractors to as-built the entire fire, life safety system, and all the phone and data lines,” said Lawrence. “Then we made an alternate means and methods system. If we’d have cut one wrong wire it could have been disastrous for a 24/7 operational hospital.”

Dowell said the complexities of dealing with so many stakeholders as well as an occupied renovation might have scared others off.

“Hoffman was a huge help in figuring out the logistics of what really could work, and untangling the electrical, telephone and fire alarms systems,” he said. “A lot of the old historic structures did not have plans. Knowing the design was in flux, Hoffman was able to work on parallel paths, to move ahead with things that we knew would impact the critical path. So when we did have approval, we were much further down the road.”

The result is a mammoth public project, delivered on time and under budget, which represents the humane face of the state of Oregon.