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Atrium

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Architectural Woodwork Institute

design solutions

Summer 2025 | \$6.25





Welcoming Care.

University Health Facility Adds
Welcome Atrium to Hospital.



The University of Illinois Health Welcome Atrium is an addition to the existing hospital building, a 451-bed tertiary care facility originally constructed in 1977, and serves as the new main entry point to the hospital. UI Health is the University of Illinois Chicago's academic medical center. In addition to the hospital, UI Health includes a network of outpatient clinics and neighborhood health centers. It provides comprehensive care, education and research to train health care leaders and foster healthy communities and is dedicated to the pursuit of health equity.



The 12,000 square feet addition and 8,000 square feet renovations cost \$14.3 million and were started in 2015 and completed in January 2023. The primary objectives were to develop a new entrance to the hospital, waiting space and develop the circulation of hospital public spaces.

The hospital stressed that the design needed to not only improve first impressions but also consider the psychosocial aspects of the patient's experience. It was also required that the hospital remain fully functional during the two-year phased construction and renovation project.

Legat Architects, Gurnee, Illinois, handled the renovation project. Architectural woodwork for the atrium was fabricated by Lange Bros. Woodwork Co., Inc., an AWI member firm located in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Welcoming Feeling

The primary overall goal of the project was to create a welcoming first impression for patients and visitors, explains Pamela Hill of UI Health. "The use of wood as a dominant interior finish material was a major contributor to the aesthetic environment."





The hospital's underwhelming main entrance was virtually unrecognizable as a portal to the main hospital as the entry canopy was low, dark, and set back from the street. The design of the expansion creates a wide canopy that welcomes visitors with lighting at night and heat throughout the winter. The enclosure features a future green roof, triple-glazed walls, and polished stone stepped planters that surround the perimeter and mimic the interior planters.

The existing reception desk stood close to the revolving front door and directly in the path to the elevators. This caused visitors to wait in long lines that often continued outside. Additionally, the cramped interior caused confusion navigating the space. When visitors step through the new

16-foot self-rotating revolving door, they enter a spacious, light-filled atrium and approach a large reception desk. A wide diagonal corridor leads to a full-height wayfinding art wall that signals the building's central public elevator bank. In the opposite direction, a grand stair leads up to the second level pedestrian bridge and the contemplation space.

at a glance

AWI MANUFACTURING
MEMBER:

**Lange Bros.
Woodwork Co., Inc.**

LOCATION:

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

ESTABLISHED:

1932

**Licensed
QCP Manufacturer**



A congested seating area forced sick patients, visitors, and hospital vendors into a condensed space. Now, spread out seating area clusters promote privacy so visitors can relax and not worry about sitting so close to others.

The elliptical underside of the contemplation space encloses a central seating area ideal for families of small children to gather and play. Additionally, four manmade trees absorb sound and dapple seating areas with sunlight streaming through the low-emissive glazing. The design team studied simulations of daylight angles, shadows, and glare to maximize the views and lighting while avoiding excessive glare.

“We collaborate with architects, contractors, and building owners to create high-quality, custom woodwork.”

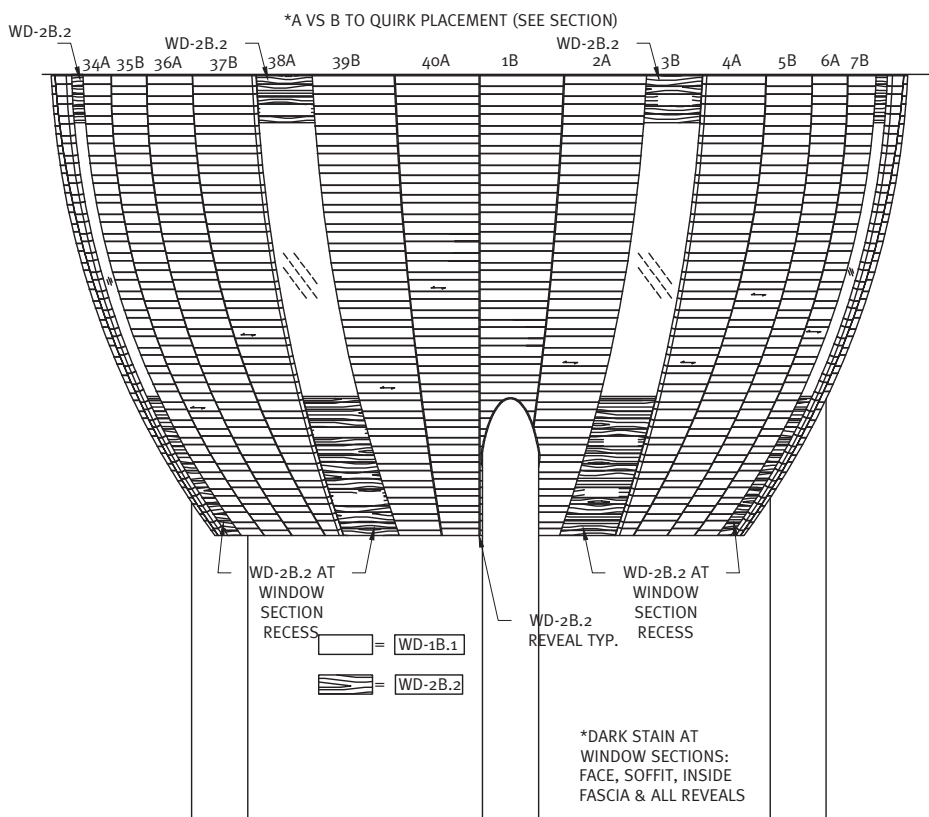
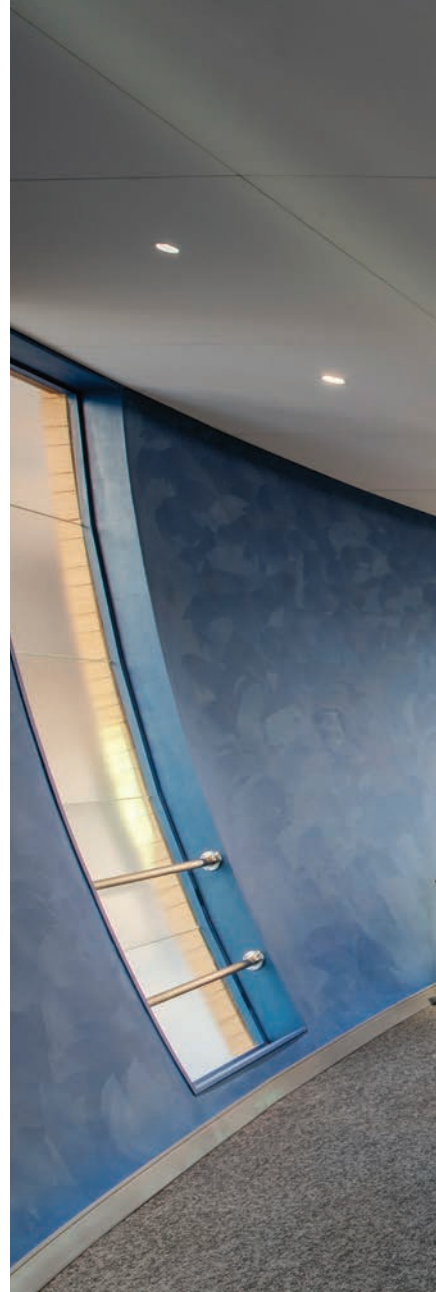
– Lori Poull, Project Manager
Lange Bros. Woodwork Co., Inc.

Contemplation Room

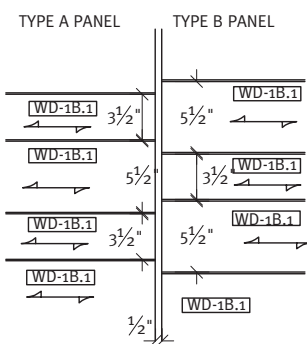
According to Lori Poull of Lange Bros. Woodwork her firm fabricated the security desk, the greeter’s desk, and the contemplation room.

“The most challenging and noteworthy aspect of the project was, without a doubt, the contemplation room,” she notes. “Its egg-shaped

design made the fabrication incredibly complex—imagine trying to cover an egg with wood that doesn’t easily bend in multiple directions. Achieving proper alignment while ensuring a seamless finish was no small feat. The craftsmanship of our team who assisted the engineer played a crucial role in making this project a success!”



ELEVATION
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We used 3D CAD drawings created by the structural engineer to create mock-ups in our shop to determine how to attach the wood to the egg-like shape, continues Poull. “When the field condition did not hold to the drawing we had to modify our game plan. Our skilled craftsman had to go old school, with additional trips to field verify and ensure an accurate fit of the panels to the wall and one another.”

Bamboo plywood was used because of the linear graining, sustainability, and biophilic references that the product brings as a finish material and shape, explains Michael Lundeen of Legat Architects. “The ellipsoid shape for the contemplation space was very complex in its nature. The metal frame for the structure

was prefabricated off-site as large radiused panels and assembled on-site for greater control and precision. Additionally, the millwork cladding was fabricated as a panelized system to have greater control for the custom details.”

Creating the shape of the wood panels was a monumental feat, he continues. “The compound curves and segmented panels forming ellipses pushed the limits of the fabricator and installer. Fitting the panels to have consistent vertical and horizontal joints was very difficult.”

The elliptical wood clad contemplation space that appears to be suspended within the two-story atrium is the dramatic interior focal point of the project, adds Hill. "It provides a striking and natural complement to the interior planters that line the perimeter of the glass enclosed lobby. Accessible on the second floor of the atrium, the contemplation space serves as a serene place of respite, prayer and mindfulness and is available to all patients, visitors and staff."

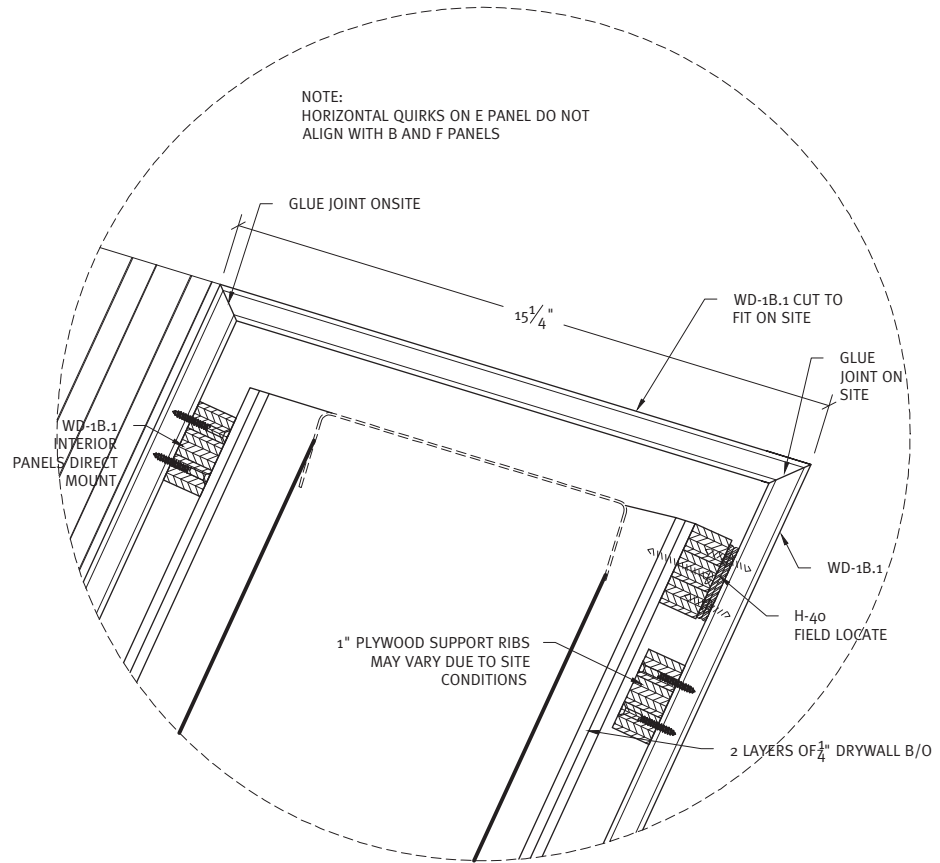


Challenges/ Collaboration

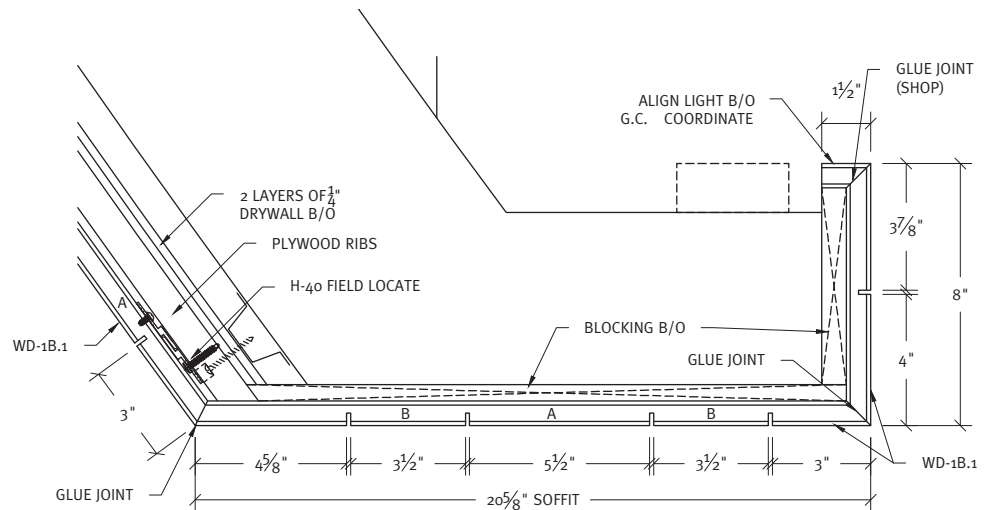
The contract documents described a design and details that would mostly be created with on-site labor, recalls Lundeen. “Lange Bros. Woodwork developed a panelized system which would be factory fabricated and finished. Initially the panel edges and reveals of the mock-up were installed inconsistently. The general contractor, woodworker and architect agreed that the inconsistency of the joints needed to be improved. A new mock-up with modified details was developed that could be adjusted in the field. The woodworkers installed several key panels then field measured secondary panels to achieve a higher level of detailing.”

The working relationship with the architect and designer was highly collaborative, with everyone helping each other overcome obstacles, echoes Poull.

“Lange Bros. exhibited exceptional diligence and commitment to the project,” says Hill. “The careful attention to detail and meticulous coordination resulted in flawless execution.” 🏆



SECTION
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SECTION
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PROJECT:
**University of
Illinois Health
Welcome Atrium**
Chicago, IL

PROJECT OWNER:
**University of
Illinois Chicago**
Chicago, IL

WOODWORKER:
**Lange Bros.
Woodwork Co., Inc.**
Milwaukee, WI

ARCHITECT:
Legat Architects, Inc.
Gurnee, IL

GENERAL CONTRACTOR:
F.H. Paschen
Chicago, IL

PHOTOGRAPHER:
Connor Steinkamp
Menomonee Falls, WI