

the art of healthcare design

Laguna Honda Hospital moves into its next century of service with an ambitious and standard-setting design by Stantec/Anshen+Allen

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"When I am no longer even a memory, just a name, I hope my voice may perpetuate the great work of my life."

—From a rare recording of 70-year-old Florence Nightingale's voice, captured on Edison Paraffin Wax Cylinder on July 30, 1890.

Florence Nightingale's memory lived on in the generations of San Franciscans who have spent time at Laguna Honda Hospital, a skilled nursing center based on Nightingale's nursing philosophy that was built in 1866 to care for indigent Gold Rush pioneers and was finally replaced in 2010 by a state-of-the-art, acute care and rehabilitation facility designed by Anshen+Allen. Admittedly, the 30-person "Nightingale Wards" of the original facility have given way to a contemporary healthcare model that emphasizes patient privacy over communal care, but down to the last detail the new Laguna Honda represents Nightingale's most important legacy and the "great work" of her life: an ethos of humane, patient-focused care.

Laguna Honda's history—and particularly its 10-year march toward modernization and rebirth—is a long and complex story. Suffice it to say that in a way, the new facility is the tobacco industry's gift to the City of San Francisco. Dreadfully outdated by local seismic and federal patient privacy regulations, as well as the advance of time and technology, Laguna Honda had been continuously threatened with closure since 1984 and might well have been shut down had it not been for the determination of then-mayor (now California State Senator) Dianne Feinstein, who wanted Laguna Honda to remain a vital source of healthcare for the people of San Francisco, and City Attorney Louise Renne, who in 1998 allocated the Bay City's share of California's \$20 billion tobacco industry lawsuit settlement toward fixing Laguna Honda, which by then had become a pressing public health issue.

The residential towers at Laguna Honda Hospital (right) take their design inspiration from the historic architecture of the original Laguna Honda buildings, but contain a state-of-the-art skilled nursing facility. The towers are linked by a Pavilion building housing rehabilitation services, a service corridor, and the Esplanade (opposite), a long, wide corridor that serves as the "public street" of Laguna Honda. The extensive art program, mandated by the City of San Francisco for all public buildings, makes references to nature and history. In the entry lobby, a mosaic mural by artist Owen Smith (above) depicts the iconic Golden Gate Bridge.





It was a big problem that required a big design solution. In 1999 Anshen+Allen partnered with the office of Gordon Chong (now Stantec) to answer an RFP to design the new hospital. The \$784-million, 750-resident, LEED Silver-certified, skilled nursing facility finally and triumphantly celebrated its grand reopening on June 30, 2010.

Lawrence Funk, associate administrator of Laguna Honda Hospital, explains that the new Laguna Honda reflects the same values of patient-focused care upon which the original hospital was built, and that the ambitious mission for the new facility is to encourage rehabilitation and independent living while setting a national and international standard for the enhancement of the quality of life. Early descriptors for the design included the words innovative, technologically advanced, efficient, flexible, humane, natural—and importantly, accessible, given Laguna Honda's history of service to the less fortunate. Still today, a majority of residents are indigent. "Socioeconomic status did not cause us to limit our vision," says Funk. "It is a San Francisco value that we take care of those in need."

Adding to the designers' challenge was the need to fulfill the goals in a way that puts each resident at the center of his or her own care by creating an environment that emphasizes independence. "All residents can choose their own path," explains Mivic Hirose, executive director at Laguna Honda. "Laguna Honda used to be a place where people came to live the rest of their lives.





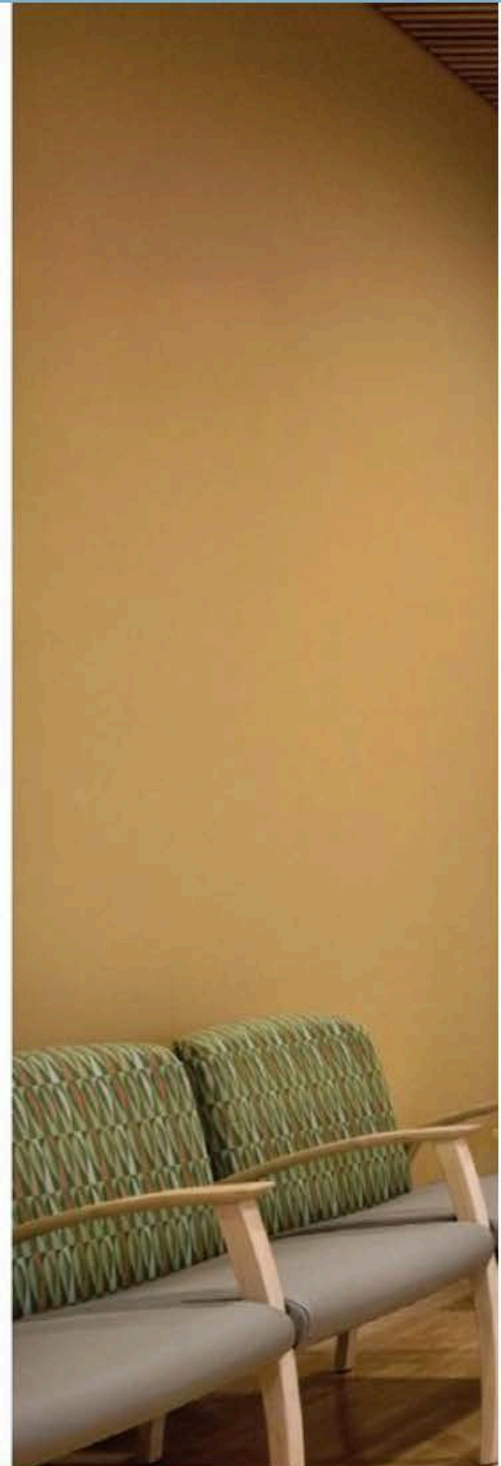
Amenities along the Esplanade include a multimedia library (opposite top), a natatorium for aquatherapy (opposite bottom), and an art studio (left). The handrail seen in the foreground of the view into the studio is actually an art installation by artist Cliff Garten. "That 400-ft.-long piece of sculpture had to meet each and every piece of unforgiving code," says Susan Pontious, public art program director for the San Francisco Arts Commission. But for the 70 percent of Laguna Honda's residents in wheelchairs who use the handrail to pull themselves along the corridor, it has become a highly interactive, tactile, and functional addition to the art program.

Today, it is a stepping stone, a place to reinvigorate them for the next step in their lives by promoting maximum physical and cognitive independence."

With an extensive program that includes everything from rehabilitation with hope of independent life to a continuum of care for the aged and infirm that emphasizes independence for as long as possible, the design team made "resident-focused care" its overarching goal. "We took it as a point of inspiration," says Anshen+Allen principal Jeff Logan. "The neighborhood concept we generated was inspired by that directive."

Floor plans, circulation paths, and amenities were all developed to approximate varying levels of domesticity and independent life, and the design solution began with the massing of the buildings nestled in the hills of the Laguna Honda site in the western part of the city. Each floor of the two, multistory residential towers (one five stories, one seven) contains distinct "households" of 15 residents each, combined in "neighborhoods" of four households (or 60 residents). At this most intimate level, residents enjoy private or semi-private rooms with shared bathrooms, household living rooms with flat-screen television, and core neighborhood centers with activity space, dining facilities, dedicated kitchens where fresh food is plated, and outdoor terraces.

Laguna Honda wholeheartedly embraces its site and the designers took great care to activate the outdoor spaces—the facility opens up to a valley complete with gardens, walking paths, a



greenhouse, wander garden, and basketball court. But each residential area also was given a terrace so residents “don’t have to leave their neighborhoods to go outdoors,” explains Anshen+Allen associate principal Sharon Woodworth. In addition, “we incorporated as much southern light into the design as possible,” she says, with three of the four living rooms in each neighborhood facing south and the fourth facing west. Logan notes that light and views create a real sense of place and are among the things he likes best about Laguna Honda. “Visual access to the landscape offers residents the same kind of lifestyle as anyone living in San Francisco,” he says.

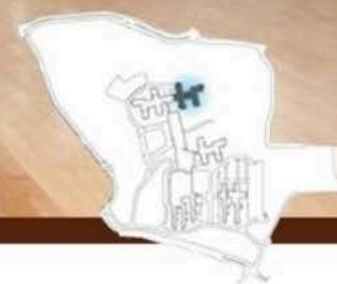
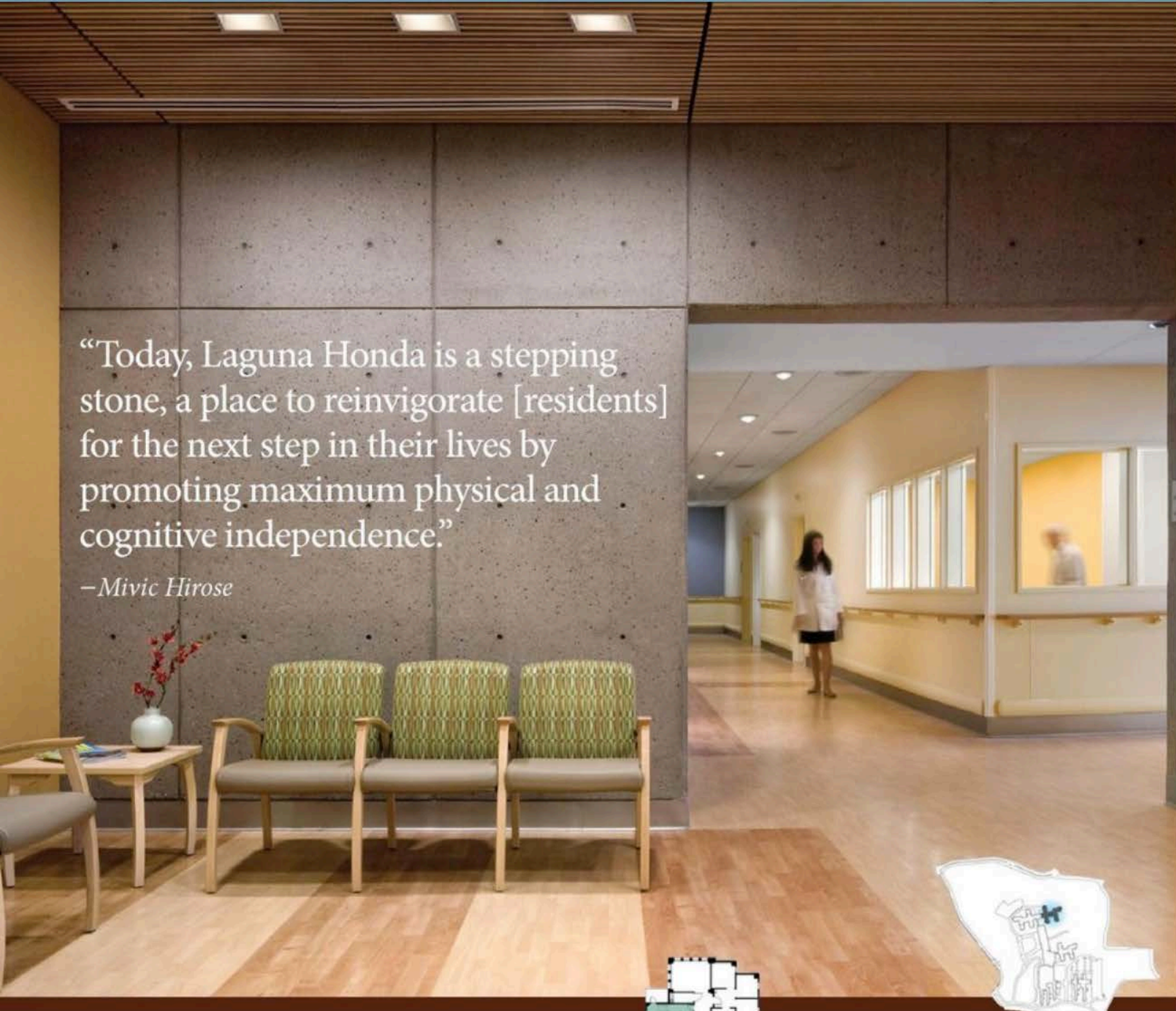
The towers are connected by a four-story link building or “Pavilion” that houses inpatient and outpatient rehabilitation services, as well as a café, art studio, multimedia library, community meeting room, barber and beauty shops, a tropical bird aviary, and a cafeteria with indoor and outdoor seating. These public amenities are located

along a broad indoor boulevard known as the Esplanade in a way that references the activity of a city street. On the exterior, “the design reflects these sensibilities,” notes Logan. “The architecture of the two towers has a domestic feel to it, while the Pavilion building is a more civic response.” Operationally, the link building also includes a transport floor that efficiently connects the two towers, but its far greater value is experiential; it adds much to the holistic quality of institutional life by encouraging exercise and mobility and drawing residents out of the isolation and into the social life of Laguna Honda.

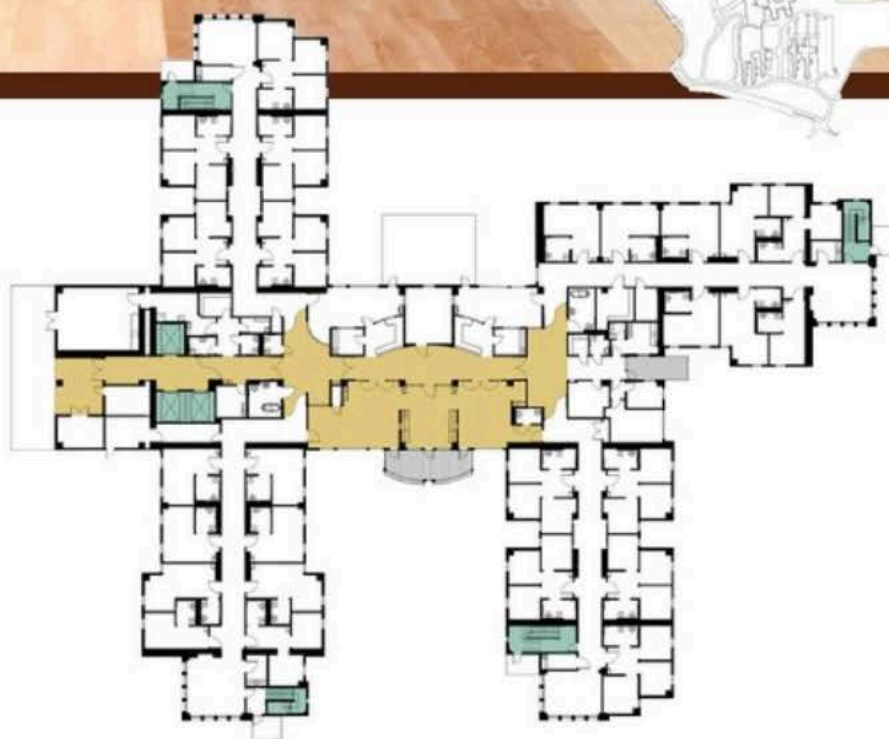
“It is also one of the places where the integration of art and architecture was really important,” says Logan. Since 1969, municipal ordinance in San Francisco has dictated that 2 percent of the construction costs for public projects be dedicated to art enrichment programs, which translated into \$3.9 million for Laguna Honda. “Wayfinding, passage of time, texture, personalization of space, interaction, engagement...

“Today, Laguna Honda is a stepping stone, a place to reinvigorate [residents] for the next step in their lives by promoting maximum physical and cognitive independence.”

—Mivic Hirose



Rehabilitation is a major focus at Laguna Honda, and its location in the link building, which essentially serves as the public face of the facility, makes it easily accessible to the public. The concrete-walled waiting area (above) is close to the entry. A living room in the rehab unit (opposite) features a terracotta landscape by artist Takenobu Igarashi. “Neighborhoods” and “households” are the center of residential life at Laguna Honda. Each of the floors in the two residential towers include intimately scaled households with private and semi-private rooms for 15 residents each, and four households combine to create neighborhoods of 60 residents each with shared dining and activities space (floor plan right).





The designers took great care to create connections to outdoor views and nature, so Laguna Honda residents could enjoy the same sense of place as any other San Franciscan. A meeting area along the Esplanade's main street (above right) and a typical household living room in the residential towers (right) offer generous views to open space. Households include groupings of private and semi-private rooms (above left), where each sleeping area has its own sliding door, furnishings, and window.



these are all things our program contributes in conjunction with the architecture," says Susan Pontious, public art program director for the San Francisco Arts Commission.

Each residential floor was assigned to a selected artist who in turn created an art program that helps facilitate wayfinding and differentiate between households, making it easy for residents to understand their whereabouts as they leave and return to their neighborhoods and households. In public spaces, such as the lobby and Esplanade, the art programs took on more historic or inspirational tones, as in a series of Louis DeSoto tapestries depicting the history of Laguna Honda, a mosaic mural of the Golden Gate Bridge by Owen Smith, and a 400-ft. handrail in the Esplanade by artist Cliff Garten. "The hospital handrail

is ubiquitous, but here it became a piece of art," says Woodworth. "It becomes a fanciful element that has beauty, texture, patina."

In total, Laguna Honda currently holds 110 commissioned pieces with 87 more planned for the collection. "I can't think of another facility that has art integrated to this degree," say Pontious. It's a facility of firsts in many ways, and for the design team a just reward for 10 years of diligent planning without ever losing sight of the needs of the patient. "Our goal was to do it once, and do it right," says Funk. This was the opportunity of a lifetime for the San Francisco area, and hopefully it will serve us for the next 90 years. ©

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