

## Communication is key for health clinic project

By: Josh Kulla in Construction August 2, 2018 3:52 pm



Multnomah County's North Portland Health Center recently received a \$4.5 million renovation carried out by general contractor **INLINE Commercial Construction**. (Josh Kulla/DJC)

Exceptional communication can turn a good project into a truly great one. That was the case for the project team involved in the recent \$4.5 million renovation of the **Multnomah County Health Department's** North Portland Health Center.

Designed by **Hennebery Eddy Architects** and built by Aloha-based general contractor **INLINE Commercial Construction**, the remodel provided a much-needed upgrade of a 15-year-old clinic on North Lombard Street in St. Johns. Crews added a host of new exam rooms and team rooms, replaced a pharmacy, and installed security improvements.

The clinic remained open during the entire 12-month project – well, almost.

"INLINE discovered about a third of the way through the project that the main sewer line underneath the building had deteriorated and needed to be replaced," Multnomah County project manager Greg Hockert said. "And it was only closed one day, which is an amazing feat. That's like throwing a magic wand over the building with some fairy dust on top of it."

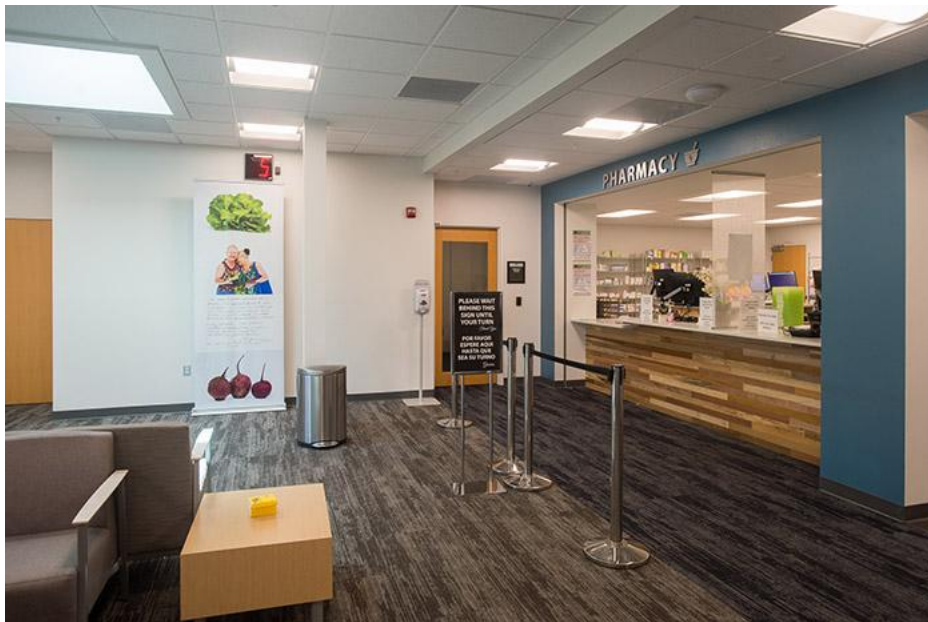
With **INLINE** already on-site, the fix was remarkably easy, Hockert said.

"From my side, once you bring a contractor on board, it's about building the relationships with the people you're servicing," he said. "It was clear and open communications, and that's how you have a successful project. It takes a special talent to do what they did in here; it's a skill set that's not easy to find."

The North Portland Health Center was built in 2003, but aging quickly. It had a rather dour color palette as well as security deficiencies that left staff and patients vulnerable. Possibly the worst flaw in this regard involved the former first-floor pharmacy, which was located barely 10 feet from an exterior door and just around the corner from the main entrance.

"Having two entrances and exits for the public is not a good security move," said Meg Matsushima, project manager for **Hennebery Eddy Architects**.

The two-story clinic's floor plan was changed extensively to enhance security, Matsushima said. Also, the facility gained new interior and exterior cameras, staff card-lock access, duress alarms and more. Perhaps most noticeable to the public is that there is now only one public entrance and exit.



he pharmacy in Multnomah County's North Portland Health Center was relocated to the second floor as part of a recent comprehensive upgrade of the building and its amenities, which serve the St. Johns and greater North Portland area. (Josh Kulla/DJC)

Also, fencing and a gate were added to the parking lot, while a new dental office was built on the second floor next to the pharmacy. However, the dental office cannot open until additional funding is provided.

In addition, the building's interior now is highlighted by a range of blue and green tones to provide patients with a calmer atmosphere than the previous one.

Project costs topped out at roughly \$150 per square foot, Matsushima said. Funding came from a half-dozen different sources, including a \$935,000 federal **Health Resources and Services Administration** grant.

"We didn't use extravagant materials; we used good, sustainable materials where they counted," Matsushima said. "I think this project represented good stewardship of taxpayer dollars, and people now think it's a new clinic. If they can get the dental portion up and running it's going to be incredibly viable."

INLINE project superintendent Bill Anderson also credited communication with the smooth outcome. In working with neighboring residents and businesses, as well as clinic staff and patients, it took constant juggling to complete the project, he said.

"One of the things was just the team atmosphere from the county to the clinic to the architect, as well as our team just trying to figure out the intent and the best way to get there," he said. "And always keep in mind that we have to make sure they're still operating and keeping the doors open and keeping the patients happy."

Now, the county health department has a new crown jewel.

"It's really all about the access for the patients," county project manager Nicki Winchester said. "And this is really the high point of our system now."

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