



NATURE THEME IN CUSTOM-DESIGNED VINYL FLOOR HELPS NURTURE HEALING IN MARYLAND HOSPITAL

Insets depicting variety of indigenous wildlife and vegetation highlight colorful vinyl tile floor in new acute care facility

Crabs...tortoises...herons...butterflies...frogs...rabbits...and more.

While this may sound like an assortment of wildlife you would find in a zoo, it's actually what patients and their families are finding in the new Acute Care Pavilion of the Anne Arundel Medical Center (AAMC) in Annapolis, Maryland. Only in this case, the animals aren't real; they are custom-designed patterns that are inset into the facility's colorful new vinyl floor.

Located on the outskirts of Annapolis, the new 277,000-square-foot facility replaces a much older facility that was located in the historic area of the city. When it came to the design of the new hospital, Carolyn Core, Vice President of Corporate Services for the Medical Center had some definite goals in mind. "First and foremost," she says, "we wanted it to have a warm, nurturing environment that would help the patients get better as well as make their families feel more comfortable."

Nature Theme Featured in Vinyl Floors

To accomplish that goal, Core decided to bring nature into the building. "Numerous studies have shown that the use of nature in healthcare environments helps promote healing. It also helps reduce anxiety of both patients and their families."

To implement the design objective, Core introduced a colorful, nature theme into all the vinyl floors in the hospital. Every patient room, plus the critical care unit, has a multi-colored, custom-designed inset in the floor, oriented to the patient lying in bed. Because Annapolis is situated on the Chesapeake Bay, many of the insets depict wildlife that is indigenous to the area, such as crabs, frogs, turtles and fish.

Clinical care corridors are included in the nature theme as well. In these areas, patients will find a variety of leaves or vines inset into the floor. In addition, accent-colored borders are often used to highlight areas, while geometric patterns are used in many staff areas to give them additional visual interest.

Vinyl Tile Chosen for Patient Rooms

When it came to selecting a floor covering for these areas, Core notes that she and her team investigated a number of different materials. "We looked at the cost, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of each. We even installed trial floors in high traffic areas to see how they held up." Following the tests, vinyl composition tile was chosen for all patient rooms, clinical care corridors and a number of examination rooms.

Armstrong's Standard EXCELON® Multicolor™ vinyl composition tile in light-colored Rodeo Fawn was selected as the principal resilient floor in the new facility. Multicolor tile features a tone-on-tone visual comprised of three base colors and four accent colors. This combination of colors provides the flexibility to change and/or renovate other interior finishes that coordinate with the floor without replacing the floor.



Every patient room in the Anne Arundel Medical Center's new Acute Care Pavilion has a multi-colored, custom-designed inset in the vinyl floor. Here, a crab was created using Imperial® Texture™ tile.

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Armstrong's Standard EXCELON® Imperial® Texture™ vinyl composition tile in nine different colors was chosen for the borders, geometrics and custom insets. Imperial® Texture™ tiles feature a "through-pattern" construction, which means the color and pattern extend throughout the thickness of the tile. This helps ensure that the tile's color and design will last the life of the floor.

First Experience with Custom Insets

The architectural firm responsible for the overall planning and design of the new facility was Wheeler Goodman Masek & Associates of Annapolis. Chuck Goodman, one of the principals, explains that the design of the new hospital is not merely patient focused, but patient/family focused.

"It's important to take into account the impact of the illness on the family," he says. "From that aspect, anything that can be done to de-institutionalize the environment is beneficial. The integration of nature into the floor is a good example."

The Acute Care Pavilion marked Goodman's first experience with custom-designed insets in a vinyl floor. "I'm now a believer," he states. "I was amazed at the technical achievement, especially how tight the joints are. It is a very colorful and affordable way of making vinyl flooring do something special."

Vinyl Flooring Easy to Maintain

CUH2A of Princeton, New Jersey, provided the interior design for the project. Jay Blose, CUH2A'S project manager, explains that the old facility was bland when it came to floor coverings. "It had a very clinical appearance with very few accent colors, so it tended to be monotonous and boring."

Blose explains that hospital management wanted to create a new atmosphere in the new facility. "AAMC wanted a non-institutional look, and more of a hospitality feel," he says. "The introduction of a nature theme was a creative way to do that. Plus, the theme is truly universal in the sense that it can be used anywhere because it does not differentiate between male and female, young and old, or race and national origin."

Blose also notes that one of the main reasons vinyl tile was used in the patient rooms, exam rooms and clinical corridors is because it is easier to maintain aseptic conditions than with most other flooring materials. "When it comes to housekeeping, the ability to easily clean up liquids is a factor in favor of resilient flooring."

He adds that, "Our previous experience with this customization technique has proved that pattern and design can be successfully integrated into this type of flooring with both precision and artistry at no sacrifice to the quality of the installation or maintainability of the finished product."

Benefits of Customization Are Many

"Based off our experience, I would urge other healthcare management officials to think more about what they can do with basic building materials," Core concludes. "When it comes to vinyl flooring, for example, it truly does not cost that much more to create custom patterns in the floor. And, the benefits in terms of patient satisfaction are well worth the added cost."



Custom inset leaves of Imperial® Texture™ are scattered in a field of Multicolor™ tile to convey the nature theme in the corridors of the new facility

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