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## **Medical Centers Call Wayfinding Experts in Earlier to Increase Efficiency, Improve Patient and Visitor Experience**

Four new projects for Michigan firm reflect growing recognition of wayfinding's importance in facility design

**Traverse City, MI** — Corbin, an environmental graphic design firm based in Traverse City, has begun working with four medical centers in three states in recent months, as medical facility planners increasingly turn to wayfinding experts to help develop more patient-friendly places.

In two cases, Corbin's role goes beyond simply developing a signage system and extends to giving input into architectural details and campus traffic patterns for new facilities. This expanded role reflects the growing realization among medical facility planners and administrators that wayfinding — the ability to determine your location in an environment and reach your destination — depends on a lot more than signs, and that everything from the number of one-way streets on a medical campus to the placement of elevator lobbies in a building affects how easily people can navigate a campus or facility.

"We're working more closely with architects to create environments that respond with a heightened sensitivity to patients' needs," said Jeff Corbin, the firm's president.

At **Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center** in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, the wayfinding challenges are a result of the sheer size of the 86-acre downtown campus, the more than 100 buildings that make up the medical center, and their congested urban location. Corbin was called in after the medical center had solicited several proposals from architectural firms that didn't fix the problem.

"The interconnected buildings and recent addition of parking decks have contributed to an impression of over 4 million square feet of confusion," said Hilda Haithcock, director of interior design services and planning for the medical center. "We need a wayfinding system and plan, not just signage. I was very impressed with Corbin's philosophy of wayfinding."

Corbin's work at Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center involves improving interior and exterior wayfinding by analyzing traffic patterns and destination names, and recommending the introduction of architectural landmarks to help patients, visitors and staff navigate the campus. In particular, Corbin's

designers and information architects will review how public entrances are designated, how floors are labeled, and how people make the transition from parking garages to buildings. A new \$75 million cancer center and a parking structure will also be analyzed from a wayfinding perspective.

Corbin is also working 150 miles away at Asheville, North Carolina's **Mission St. Joseph's Health System**. There Corbin has been hired to design new exterior and interior wayfinding programs for the medical center, which is the result of a recent merger between Mission Hospital and St. Joseph's Hospital, Asheville's two large private acute care hospitals. Corbin is also involved in efforts to rename the two hospitals and their departments to make them seem more unified, and to facilitate post-merger marketing efforts. Licensed for more than 800 beds, Mission St. Joseph's Health System is a regional referral center for the western quarter of North Carolina and portions of several adjoining states.

At **Northwestern Memorial Hospital** in downtown Chicago, Corbin has been hired to perform a wayfinding analysis and provide recommendations to the hospital for wayfinding in the new Prentice Women's Hospital. Working with VOA Associates and OWP/P Architects, Chicago's largest architecture/engineering firm, Corbin's role goes beyond traditional environmental graphic design to taking part in decisions on building site issues and road circulation patterns. The \$200 million, 117-bed Prentice Women's Hospital is being built in response to continued growth in patient volume at Northwestern; the original 25-year-old facility that it will replace is already the largest birthing center in Illinois, having seen more than 8,000 deliveries in 2001.

Further west, Corbin recently began working with **Saint Alphonsus Regional Medical Center** in Boise, Idaho. Corbin is partnering with HDR Inc., a global architectural and engineering firm, to help develop a circulation plan for the campus including the introduction of traffic roundabouts to improve traffic flow. Saint Alphonsus serves over half a million people, and is the region's leading trauma center.

Since its founding in 1976, Corbin has completed hundreds of projects for health care, educational, governmental and corporate clients across the country. The firm's expanding scope of project types includes signage and wayfinding, interactive systems and Web sites, identity systems and print communications – all based on the philosophy that "access equals success." A partial list of Corbin's wayfinding clients includes University Health Network in Toronto, Penn State University, the cities of Los Angeles, Milwaukee and Atlanta, Herman Miller in Zeeland, Michigan and Recreational Equipment Inc. (REI) in Seattle. Additional information about the firm can be found online at [www.corbindesign.com](http://www.corbindesign.com)

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