

# Three: BELLEVUE HOSPITAL AMBULATORY CARE PAVILION

## New York City

Pei Cobb Freed & Partners add a gleaming, dramatic atrium entrance pavilion to one of New York's busiest and most historic hospitals.

By Russell Fortmeyer

**Architect:** Pei Cobb Freed & Partners—Ian Bader, AIA, partner in charge; Richard Cutter, AIA, project manager; Bea Lehman, AIA, project manager; Andre Morawski, landscape architect; Deborah Young, AIA, interior designer

**Client:** New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation

**Consultants:** Cosentini Associates (m/e/p, lighting); Leslie E. Robertson Associates (structural); Mueser Rutledge Consulting Engineers (geotechnical); Cerami Associates (acoustics); Medical Planning Research International (medical planning); Turner (construction manager)

**Size:** 210,000 square feet

**Cost:** \$84 million

**Completion date:** March 2005

#### Sources

**Masonry:** Mt. Sinai Blend Face Brick

**Glass curtain wall:** PPG Solarban 60 clear

**Skylight:** Viracon VRE 1-46

**Granite:** Stony Creek Granite

**Cubicle curtains:** Carnegie Fabrics

**Desks:** Knoll

**Reception chairs:** Knoll (Life chairs)

**Downlights:** Kurt Versen; Lightolier

**Wood window blinds:** Capco Group

For more information on this project, go to Building Types Study at [www.archrecord.com](http://www.archrecord.com).

An estimated 10,000 people walk through the entrance to New York City's Bellevue Hospital every day, many of them surely unaware as they traverse Pei Cobb Freed & Partners' new glass atrium that the hospital is one of the oldest in the Western Hemisphere.

Bellevue has been caring for the city's people since 1736. Originally built as an almshouse at the Lower Manhattan site of City Hall, the hospital moved in 1794 to what was formerly an 18th-century farm, called "Belle Vue," along the East River between 25th and 30th Streets. The site today is a confusing complex of hospital buildings representing various design approaches, squeezed in the midst of a typically dense Manhattan neighborhood. McKim, Mead and White developed a master plan for the facility from 1908 to 1939 and gave the hospital a grand, stylized Romanesque administration building that acted as a front door for decades before disappearing behind a banal parking garage unceremoniously plopped onto First Avenue. Medical facilities continue north on First up to 34th Street, encompassing New York University's medical center. N.Y.U. operates Bellevue on behalf of the city.

#### Program

In 2000, the hospital charged Pei Cobb Freed with the design of a new 210,000-square-foot ambulatory-care pavilion and main entrance for



First Avenue. The five-story pavilion houses 270 exam rooms for noncritical hospital functions, such as dermatology, adult and child primary care, and a women's center, as well as an outpatient cancer center on an additional mezzanine floor tucked into the north side of the ground floor.

Initial plans called for placing the new building on the site of an adjacent garden, south of where the new building stands. Ian Bader, AIA, of Pei Cobb Freed, says that given Manhattan's lack of green space throughout the city, the design team felt it was important to preserve the garden and to open the ground floor to the public as much as possible.



By resituating the entrance back to the McKim, Mead and White building, the architects restored the original symmetry of the hospital's First Avenue front door. "The new building is lifted up on columns to encourage you to look underneath it to the stone portal of the existing building," Bader says. "At the heart of the dialectic between the two

Indirect lighting washes the curtain wall at night, imbuing the original building (opposite, bottom) with new life.





Bellevue's atrium allows for temporary art exhibitions on the ground floor, as well as hospital events in an auditorium at the south end of the ground floor. Nearly 10,000 people pass through the space every day.



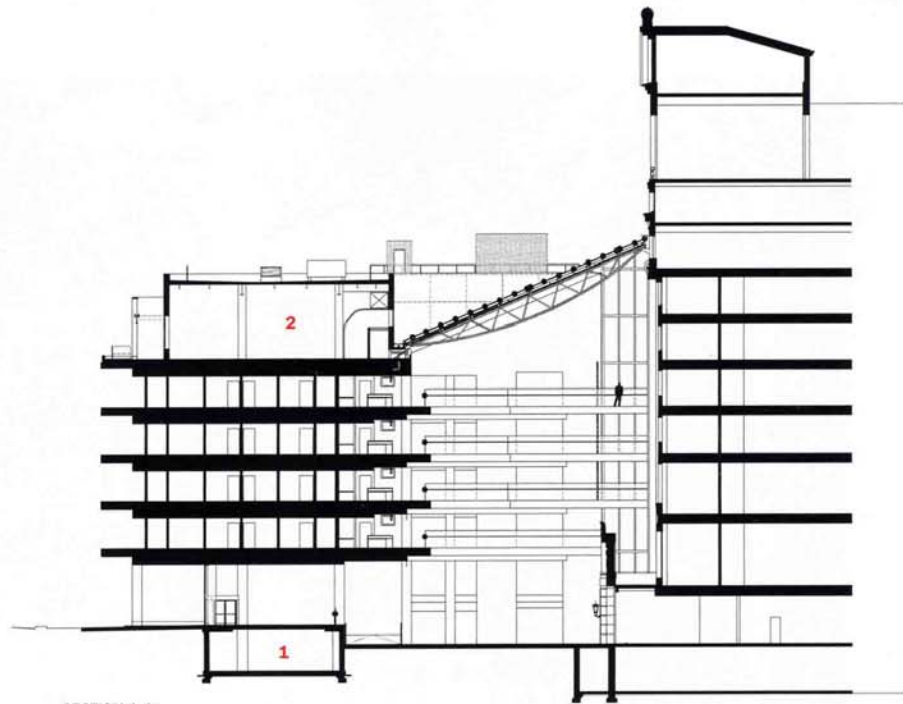
buildings, we were able to create a space for the public.”

**Solution**

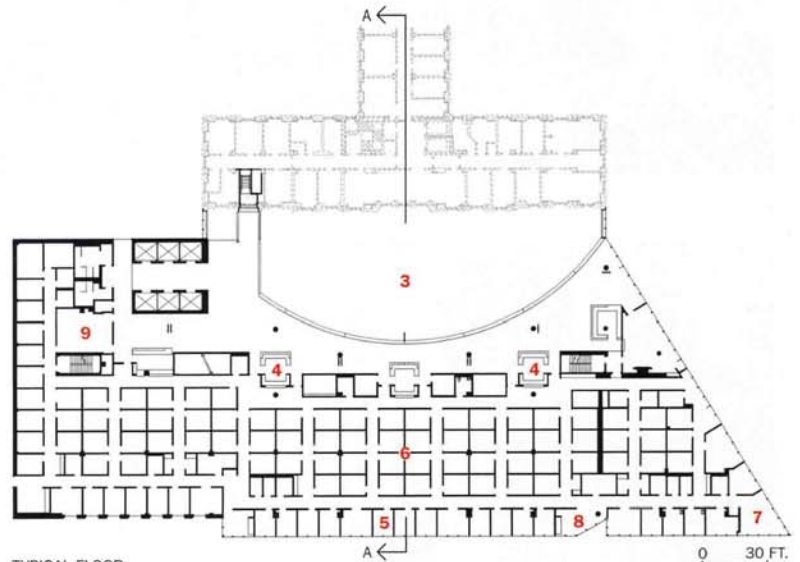
The new building’s ground-level transparency is achieved with 12-foot-high sheets of glass set in a channel and anchored to the ceiling all along the front entryway. A ramp takes visitors down the 5-foot elevation change from the street to the Connecticut granite floor of the hospital’s new atrium lobby.

The atrium structure, consisting of 65-foot-long, 11-foot-deep, shiplike bowed steel trusses, rests upon a new structure inserted in the McKim building’s seventh floor just below the cornice line. The glass curtain wall abuts the brick building with an accordion joint, guaranteeing the new building could be removed without damaging the integrity of the McKim, Mead and White structure. Bridges to the existing building on the second through fourth floors are hung from the elevator core on the north side of the building, appearing to float,

Pei Cobb Freed developed the color-coded alphabetic way-finding system iconically displayed on Bellevue’s original entrance (top).

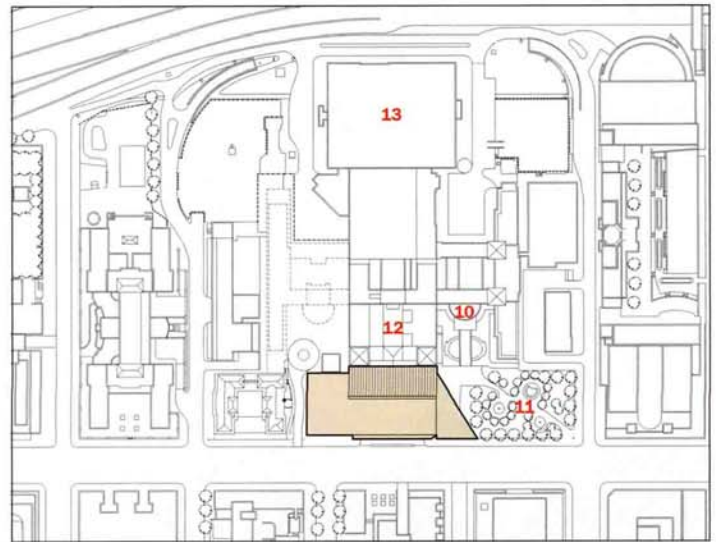


SECTION A-A



TYPICAL FLOOR

- 1. Mechanical room
- 2. Mechanical penthouse
- 3. Atrium
- 4. Typical check-in and check-out desk
- 5. Typical office
- 6. Typical exam rooms
- 7. Conference room
- 8. Staff lounge
- 9. Classroom
- 10. Previous main entry
- 11. Existing garden
- 12. Original administration building
- 13. Existing hospital tower



N 0 100 FT. 30 M.



thanks to a sophisticated system of steel struts. The entire atrium is isolated from the ambulatory-care wing by a two-hour fire separation occurring along the spine between public and private program areas.

Each patient floor combines a distinct color scheme with a mural developed by the architects using photographs from the hospital's rich historical archive. Color schemes for exam rooms vary and corridors terminate in daylight views, ensuring that patients encounter distinct environments on each visit.

The building acts as a beacon at night, with the ceiling plane pulled away from the slab edge along the exterior curtain wall to indicate the full 12-foot, floor-to-floor height so perimeter indirect T5 fluorescent lighting can illuminate the curtain wall. At night, lights installed in windows in the existing building reflect off mirrors hung from the atrium structure to wash the entire brick facade.



**Bowed trusses set on the original brick building, with atrium smoke-purge fans tucked into a grille on the opposite side (above). Staff lounges afford views of the neighborhood (left), while examination rooms accommodate the conventional requirements of ambulatory health care (below left).**

#### **Commentary**

Contrary to most contemporary health-care design, Pei Cobb Freed's scheme at Bellevue exhibits a welcome restraint in color, materials, and formal bravado. Public areas pulsate with light and activity, as vibrant as a New York street. Examination rooms and offices are clearly organized and accessible. Not only is the pavilion functionally successful, the atrium is a model of finely tuned scale, perfectly balancing the spatial interface of the new building and the imposing grandeur of the original.

It's no surprise that Pei Cobb Freed, one of the most prominent American firms, has secured several more health-care projects in New York. Examples of the firm's other work in the city are as close to Bellevue as I.M. Pei's Kips Bay Plaza apartments, a classic Modernist concrete complex from the 1960s, a mere three blocks away. The firm's continued success is not an accident. The reconfigured Bellevue adroitly realizes that most difficult of design problems: adding a thoroughly modern building to a landmark while preserving the dignity of both. ■

