

A wide-open lobby  
and naturally lit grand  
staircase make up the  
first sight many will see in  
Maple Grove Hospital.





By Bobby Hart  
Photos by Marshall Franklin Long

# A Modern Masterpiece

Maple Grove Hospital is set to open the doors of innovation with a local touch.

A little more than three months before Maple Grove Hospital opened its doors to the public, mere days after the new 300,000-square-foot facility received its temporary certificate of residency, CEO Andy Cochrane and executive director of patient care Eric Nelson were eager to give a tour without having to wear construction helmets.

Aside from a few touch-ups, the vacant rooms and hallways looked as crisp and clean as one would expect from any sanitary healthcare center. But there was still a lot of work to be done, evident by the bare walls decorated only by blue tape marking where local artists' paintings would hang. "There will be a lot of familiar scenes," Nelson says. "Even the art will have a local flavor to it."

In many ways, the open wall space served as a metaphor for the new 90-bed hospital, which was like an open canvas, awaiting only the brushstrokes of innovation and a local identity. With experienced providers like North Memorial Healthcare and Fairview Health Services collaborating on a brand-new facility like this, there was a unique opportunity to implement the most effective medical practices possible.

"If we were able to do this the best out of anybody else in the country, how would we be able to do that? We were able to ask and answer that question time after time," Nelson says. "Most facilities are already built or are old, so it's tough to change the patterns of the time. For us, we can hit the reset button and say what that idealized process is."

## Innovative Planning

When Maple Grove Hospital opens December 30, approximately five years of extensive planning will come to fruition. Even before the first patient goes into surgery or the first baby is born, each room's layout already has been tested and approved by local doctors, surgeons, nurses and patients through procedure simulations in four different phases of mock rooms made of sheet rock. "Some of the smartest people in town have put their heads together in this hospital," Nelson says.



This emergency room is the first stop for patients who get dropped off by ambulance.

## Maple Grove Hospital's Services

- Emergency care center
- Family birth center
- Surgical services
- Orthopedics
- Pediatrics
- Urology
- Intensive care
- Imaging services
- Gynecology
- Cardiology
- Neurology
- Behavioral
- Ear, nose and throat

One study taken into consideration showed nurses spend an average of 45 minutes per shift looking for supplies. So to save some of that time, Maple Grove Hospital's patient rooms use what are called patient servers, basically large two-door supply storage cabinets that can be stocked from outside the room. Instead of leaving the patient to go fish for supplies, all a nurse needs to do to get restocked is press a couple of buttons on a staff terminal from the room. "Nurses are able to stay in the room, continue to develop a relationship with the patient and give good care," Nelson says. "We couldn't find a process anywhere like it. We essentially invented it."

Along with an electronic medical records system, the hospital features an electronic barcode medication charting system used to eliminate medication errors. "What that means is before I give you a medication, I'll scan you, the medication and myself so that we record that I'm giving you this medication and this dose at this time," Cochrane says. "It will also search for any allergies that someone may have

missed, and it will question if it's the normal dose. All those things are just looking out, because there are errors made in healthcare. We're really trying to get that error rate to zero."

## Local Touch

Although legislation was signed in 2005 to build Maple Grove Hospital, the need for such a local facility has been a hot community topic for many years. Previously, the closest hospital in the area was North Memorial Medical Center in Robbinsdale, which is about 11 miles away. "But there are 22 stop lights," Nelson says. "And we know what I-94 looks like on Friday during rush hour in cabin season."

Compared to the size of other hospitals in the area, Maple Grove Hospital is stuck in the middle. It's larger than the community hospitals in Monticello and Buffalo, but smaller than Mercy Hospital in Coon Rapids. However, there's room for growth, something that's a common theme in the area. Although Maple Grove Hospital is planned to open with 90 beds on three floors, there is room for 300 beds on eight floors, four of which are already built.

The Family Birth Center on the west side of the hospital also was built according to the Maple Grove growth factor, more specifically the growing population of young families in the area. Nelson says they are estimating 1,200 births in 2010, and the hospital has the capacity for more with six labor and delivery rooms each, 18 post-partum rooms and two caesarean section rooms. "It will probably be one of the busiest services for us," Nelson says of the Family Birth Center.

To accommodate the growing community, Maple Grove Hospital will start with an opening medical staff of 350-400, some of whom are shared by other local medical facilities, and will produce approximately 200 new jobs, according to Kate Law, the hospital's director of human resources.

## Built Around the Patient

Even considering all the innovative equipment, top-of-the-line practices and input from medical experts, there was nothing taken more seriously when planning Maple Grove Hospital than the comfort and safety of the patient and his or her family. "We want to do as much as we can to: one, give the patient control; two, make sure that we stay out of their way as much as possible; and three, look at things from their perspective," Cochrane says.



The facility itself features a patient-centered design, with the patient rooms serving as a prime example (each and every room is private and identical, a rare trait in hospitals). “The more standardized you have something, the better and more effective way you can reduce error,” Nelson says. “So it’s the same process every single time. All the equipment, everything is in the same space. After we go live, we plan for that process to be exceptionally successful.”

Each room is equipped with a 40-inch flat-screen high-definition television that streams educational videos specific to each patients’ needs, while also providing in-room movie selections and Direct-TV. The patient can control all those electronics, plus the temperature, lighting and shades from their bed by remote. There is even a pull-out couch in each room for family members to spend the night. “There are a lot more amenities I would say than you’d normally find in hospital rooms,” Nelson says. “I think hospitals are trying to catch up to the hotel industry a little bit in amenities.”

Two leaders and masterminds behind Maple Grove Hospital are executive director of patient care Eric Nelson and CEO Andy Cochrane.

Another patient- and family-friendly feature is the food service. Room service is available during all kitchen hours, but if a patient wants to get out of the room, the Four Seasons Café provides a calming environment. Filled with natural light from floor-to-ceiling windows that reveal a view of the outdoor patio and wooded surroundings on the northwest end of the building, the café fulfills a specific mission: “We wanted this area to feel like an escape,” Nelson says. “There’s a lot of evidence in medicine of the connection to nature—that peacefulness helps the healing process.”

That scene is one of many that the Maple Grove community will soon begin to recognize. But like any masterpiece, Maple Grove Hospital is a product of a lot of effort, time, innovation and, from start to finish, completely originality. “We have the ability to do this from scratch, and most people don’t,” Cochrane says. “That’s very exciting.” //



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