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2020 Hospital of the Year—Jumping in, learning curve: First time's the charm

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Two young doctors dove right into practice ownership and building a facility all at once and got the practice of their dreams, earning them top honors in the under-8,000-square-foot category of the dvm360 Hospital Design Competition.



Exterior view of Tustin Legacy Animal Hospital. All photos courtesy of Ian Wiant/iPhotography Studio

Most people would say building a brand-new practice, taking on business ownership just five and seven years out of school, and starting families all at the same time is crazy. But the owners of Tustin Legacy Animal Hospital in Tustin, California, say it made total sense to them.

After meeting as associates at another practice, Drs. Celine Hayek and Kristin Negvesky became fast friends. They always talked of building a practice together sometime in the future. Fast forward a few years. They had both left the practice for various reasons. Dr. Negvesky attended the first WVC Women's Veterinary Summit and heard a talk about starting your own practice.

By the numbers: Tustin Legacy Animal Hospital, Tustin, CA

- **Owners:** Drs. Celine Hayek and Kristen Negvesky
- **Number of doctors:** 2, full-time
- **Exam rooms:** 4
- **Total cost:** \$435,000

"It was perfect timing," says Dr. Negvesky. "They gave us the tools to start a practice, and it just hit me: Now was the right time for us to build. I took back a lot of great ideas, and told Dr. Hayek we don't have to wait, let's do it now!" The two friends started planning, quickly hired a realtor, found a practice space, signed a lease, and started making designs for their dream practice. It all fell into place, but the build was not without its challenges.

"We had a steep learning curve, but we have complementary styles and ways of thinking about things," she says. "I think it came together nicely."

- **Cost per square foot:** \$3.58
- **Square footage:** 2,685
- **Structure type:** New, leasehold
- **Architect:** Saunders + Wiant Architects, Inc.; Newport Beach, CA
- **Interior designer:** Jolanta Powierza



Drs. Celine Hayek (left) and Kristin Negvesky (right).

The 2020 dvm360 Hospital Design Competition judges agree that the practice came together more than just nicely. In fact, these first-time practice owners and builders earned Hospital of the Year honors for practices smaller than 8,000 square feet. The Hospital Design Competition judges praised the hospital for a nicely detailed interior, great finishes, and a solid, efficient plan.

Learning curve

Drs. Negvesky and Hayek first found a realtor to help them choose a site. Having never owned a business previously, the two say they had a steep learning curve. Thankfully, their real estate agent helped lead them to the right people.

"Our agent had a lot of experience with veterinary hospitals and was a huge help, directing us where to go next," says Dr. Negvesky. "We then met someone at Bank of America for our loans, and that person recommended a CPA to us. Each step of the way someone pointed us to someone else who could help."



Side exterior view of Tustin Legacy Animal Hospital

The two say dealing with contracts was the most difficult part. Understanding all the details and keeping up with reading all the contracts posed challenges. Securing loans and handling financing also proved challenging for these newbies, but they say Bank of America was a big help.

Design dreams

“Our main goal was to design a place that gave people a really good vibe when they walked in the door,” says Dr. Negvesky. “At our place, client service is No. 1, and we wanted our hospital to feel approachable, with a clean, fresh style.”

There was also one more must-have: “A chandelier, a big one!” says Dr. Negvesky.

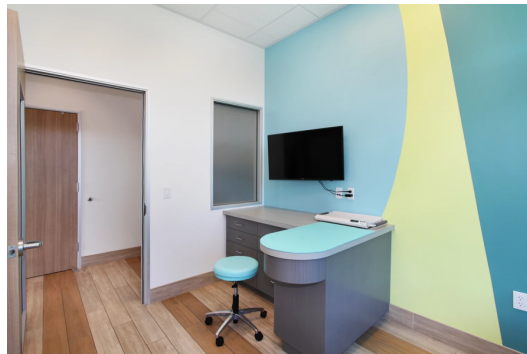


The sunny reception area features a textured wallpaper feature wall, separate dog and cat waiting areas and a wooden soffit that perfectly highlights the room's centerpiece—a large chandelier that the owners insisted on having.

The doctors got what they wanted with a fresh, clean vibe throughout their 2,685-square-foot practice with four exam rooms, separate dog and cat waiting areas, plenty of sunshine, and a view of two military hangars that are a big part of the area's culture.



Upholstered furniture throughout the practice (covered in Scotchguard) adds comfort and ambience, as shown here in the dog waiting area.



Four single-door exam rooms serve the two-doctor hospital.



A feature wall graces each exam room in the hospital's signature blue and green colors, and there is plenty of natural lighting and outside views.

The Hospital Design Competition judges praised Tustin Legacy Animal Hospital for its solid, efficient layout. The owners said their main goal when designing the practice was to have an easy-flowing plan. “We wanted enough exam rooms to be able to put clients in rooms quickly, and not have them waiting up front for long, and for the flow to allow

for technicians to easily go back and forth," says Dr. Hayek. "We also wanted to be able to see the back of the hospital from the front, without a ton of nooks and crannies and small hallways. This place was designed to be open and bright."

Speaking of, Dr. Negvesky says she wanted a ton of sunlight, so she didn't go into treatment and come out not knowing what time it was because she hadn't seen the sky all day.



Two treatment tables sit opposite the fishbowl doctors' office and offer a good view into isolation as well. Plenty of closed cabinet storage, a nearby laundry room and imaging room, and treatment cages make treatment convenient.



Here, crisp white and gray grace the walls and cabinets, with only hints of the blues and greens seen, transitioning to a more back-of-house style.

The doctors did want two-door exam rooms, but they had to scrap that idea. It took too much space from their tight floor plan.

Another strategic choice the doctors made was to not include boarding and grooming in their business. "We had heard a lot of stories of things not going well for others, and it seems that a lot of negative reviews online stem from boarding and grooming, which should not be a reflection of your medicine," says Dr. Negvesky. "We wanted to just focus on medicine and not bring that into it."

As for the look of the practice, the doctors hired an interior designer to get the right vibe. Drs. Hayek and Negvesky told the designer the colors they wanted (blues and greens), the style they were looking for (upscale yet inviting), and the requirement of a chandelier in the reception area, then the designer ran with it. "She gave us a lot of cool options and came up with a design that was fantastic for us," says Dr. Negvesky. The designer

created accent walls in each of the exam rooms, suggested a textured wallpaper behind the reception desk that looks like wood, and other whimsical art ideas throughout the hospital.



All exam rooms (like this one for cats only) have benches with no space underneath to prevent animals from hiding, a paperless record system and large screen TVs for education and viewing patient-related imaging.



The bright, sunny break room features a full kitchen, cheery colors, and a view of the WW2-area blimp hangars that make the area famous.



The comfort room offers grieving clients direct access to the parking lot and includes a couch and rug, a Sealy Posturepedic dog bed for treatments, and even blankets and pillows to add comfort to potentially difficult appointments.

Attracting clients

A week before the practice officially opened, the doctors held a grand opening event for the community to stop in and tour the practice, ask questions, and get to know them as a brand-new start up. They put up fliers, hung a banner and spread the word. Food trucks, activities, raffles and hospital tours brought in about 100 people.

On their first day of business, a dog appointment was scheduled for 8:30 a.m. with someone they knew to help start off the day in their new space. "We were super surprised, though, when someone we didn't know walked in at 8 a.m. with a cat," says Dr. Negvesky. "We were ready for a dog, so that first appointment threw us off, but we made it work. We were flying by the seat of our pants that day."

Since then, business has been growing steadily, with many new clients gained through word-of-mouth referrals and all five-star reviews on Yelp. With the shopping center building up around them, as well as 44 new homes being built nearby on an old military base, the opportunity for growth keeps coming.



Tustin Legacy Animal Hospital sits in a brand new shopping center amid an up-and-coming housing community.

Labor of love

One last detail to mention: Tustin Legacy Animal Hospital opened in June 2018, and Dr. Hayek had her first child in early July. Dr. Negvesky also had her first child in late 2019. Talk about a labor of love. Who better to travel this journey with than a good friend and business partner who really understands your needs?

Sarah A. Moser is a freelance writer in Lenexa, Kansas.



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Avets unveils new emergency and specialty hospital

June 15, 2021

dvm360 Staff



The brand-new 19,000 sq. ft. veterinary facility is now open to the public and offers its patients the latest innovations and advancements including 4 advanced surgery suites, 2 separate isolation wards, and much more.



Photo courtesy of Avets Specialty and Emergency Trauma Center

Avets Specialty and Emergency Trauma Center—a nationally recognized emergency, critical care, and specialty center for over 25 years—officially opened its new, state-of-the-art 19,000 sq. ft. emergency and specialty veterinary hospital located in Monroeville, Pennsylvania. The new facility doubles its clinical space and provides more opportunities to expand specialty services.

“Our growing team is extremely proud and excited for the opportunities that our new hospital brings to our community,” says Corey Korinko, Avets’ Hospital Director, in an organizational release.

“After navigating the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, we look forward to not only greeting our clients inside our hospital once again—but now at our brand-new facility,” he adds.

The new hospital, which is open 24/7 year-round, is located less than 2 miles from Avets former location and offers the latest advancements in veterinary medicine. These innovations include 4 advanced surgery suites, a 16-slice computed tomography (CT), 1.5 Tesla MRI, a dedicated critical care unit, 2 separate isolation wards, augmented clinical space to extend specialty services, and more including a neurology addition come this October.

Additionally, the clinic’s expansion allows it to continue supporting the needs of pet owners and primary care veterinarians residing in the greater Pittsburgh area. All emergency visits and specialty appointments are now available at the hospital’s new

location.

To learn more about Avets and its services, go [here](#).

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How to manage your construction project while staying in business

June 1, 2021

[Wayne Usiak, AIA, NCARB](#)

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Planning, managing, and staying within your budget during construction can feel overwhelming. Consider these useful tips to help keep you on track for a successful project completion.



Planning on the front-end results in everything being accounted for (Courtesy of Wayne Usiak)

You may think managing your construction project begins when you break the ground. However, this is a serious mistake, leaving you vulnerable to an out-of-control project. The decision to build or renovate must be based on a practice analysis of projected revenues generated based on services offered at a certain level. A percentage of these projected revenues will then be allotted to a mortgage payment, which will establish your initial project budget. This budget determines how much building, site, and equipment

you can purchase for your project. Then comes the overall management of your project, which consists of numerous elements occurring in a logical sequence I call the “project schedule.” To help, I’ve organized each step into a series of phases.

Predesign phase

In this phase, you will select your project team, establish your project goals and objectives, analyze your needs, finalize your site selection, itemize a budget, and develop a schedule with critical milestones. One of your first decisions is selecting an architect. Based on their level of experience with veterinary facilities, the architect will assist you in gaining your municipal site plan approval, your first “permit.” They will develop your preliminary construction budget in more detail, analyze your space needs, and help select your engineering team. You must also investigate and select your financing option and develop your budget for practice-centered expenses like IT systems, signage, furnishings, equipment, and interest carry costs during construction.

A potential deal-breaking decision is site selection. Once you confirm demographics and size, the next hurdle is zoning. Sites not zoned for veterinary use will result in a time- and resource-consuming effort to gain a variance or change. Success is never guaranteed. You must retain a surveyor and civil engineer to develop preliminary site layout drawings, including grading and drainage, building location, setbacks, parking layout, utility connections, trash receptacle location, and any required landscaping, fences, or walls. Concurrent to these efforts, there must be a geotechnical analysis consisting of soil borings and tests to determine the soil's bearing capacity for foundation design. Poor soils result in expensive foundations that can exceed the cost of the site itself. Contingencies placed in your purchase offer can allow you to negate the purchase if any of these conditions are discovered, allowing you to locate an alternative site with minimal losses.

Design phase

During this phase, your job is to review design solutions from your architect/engineer team and provide direction for them to complete the design to your satisfaction. As you go through the process, remember that your practice's success has been largely a result of your unique practice culture. You must guard your culture as you make each design decision.

You will also begin a more detailed itemization of every piece of equipment to be integrated into the design. It is critical to make equipment selections early and not change them. Each specific manufacturer has differing dimensions, clearances, and infrastructure requirements. New modifications or waiting too long can increase the chance of installation issues leading to costly change orders.

It's important to decide now which construction delivery system to use. Each system has different drawings, finance distribution, and contractor involvement requirements from this phase forward. They also have different advantages and disadvantages to consider:

- **Negotiated contract:** Often best used in renovations, the architect prepares preliminary design drawings from which selected contractors prepare construction budgets. The owner and architect review them with each

contractor, and the contractor deemed best fit is retained. The contractor's job is to remain part of the team as the drawings evolve to completion, offering input to keep the job within their original budget projection.

- **Design-bid:** The architect and engineers prepare detailed construction/permit drawings and invite contractors to provide competitive bids based on the drawings. Typically, the lowest bidder is selected for construction. You will receive the final construction cost once the design is complete and bids are submitted. Bids over budget may result in project reductions or additional borrowing.
- **Design-build:** The architect and contractor are a single team, offering both design and construction for a fixed price set by your budget. For predictable quality results, prior veterinary experience is crucial. A considerable advantage is knowing the construction cost at the project outset.

Construction/permit document phase

The architect and engineers will now prepare and submit all required documents and drawings for the building permit to gain final contractor pricing for construction. Your job is to familiarize yourself with all the drawings: architectural, structural, heating/cooling, plumbing, electrical power and lighting, and interior design. Your team should walk you through them. Remember, if it's not on the drawings, you aren't getting it. Contractors are only obligated to provide what is in the drawings.

You should also finalize your construction loan. This is an interest-only loan used to pay the contractor as they work on the building. The principal will be rolled into your permanent mortgage at project completion, but interest will be due each month at the current balance of funds distributed. It is critical you budget for this interest expense.

The construction phase



Mistakes will be cast in concrete, literally. Forgotten items are expensive to recapture. (Courtesy of Wayne Usiak)

Once you have a contractor retained, your primary responsibilities are to understand and comply with the specific payment terms, review and approve materials/color submittals or substitutions, oversee the timely delivery of owner-furnished equipment, and review

monthly contractor pay requests. Here is some key terminology to familiarize yourself with:

- **Schedule of values:** This is an itemized listing of each item of work, its total contract value, and the amount that has been paid to date.
- **Project schedule:** This is a bar chart illustrating the entire project duration, including each subcontractor's time to complete their trade, from start to completion.
- **Application for payment:** Usually submitted on AIA form G702, an application for payment shows total contract value, payments made to date, and the payment due that month. The contractor, owner, and architect must each sign this document for the bank to issue a payment
- **Retainage:** This is an amount of funds (typically 5%) withheld from each pay request until the final payment, for your financial protection.
- **Lien releases:** Each subcontractor should supply a lien release form with monthly pay requests indicating they have been paid and waive any lien rights for payment disputes.
- **Change orders:** Change orders authorize a modification in the contract amount for work to be added or deleted. Change order requests should be preceded by a proposal request from the owner, or the contractor, asking for this change. Once approved, the change order form can be processed and signed by the owner, contractor, and architect.
- **Punch list:** When the contractor is substantially complete, the architect prepares a deficiency list of items, or a punch list, to be corrected before final payment.
- **Certificate of occupancy:** Following the passing of all municipal inspections, the municipality will issue a certificate of occupancy allowing use of the building.

Managing your time

Can your practice afford to lose 40% to 60% of your personal productivity in the time it takes to construct your building? To help avoid this revenue loss, delegation is a necessity. If not you, then who should manage the time-consuming day-to-day tasks of managing the project? You could retain an outside construction manager who may bring construction knowledge but will not understand the nuances of you or your practice. This can, and has, resulted in onsite decisions that are not always best for the practice, or the project.

A more favorable option is to delegate project management to someone who understands the practice (eg, practice manager, practice administrator, or head technician). The architect can supplement this project manager's practice knowledge with their construction knowledge to ensure everything is running smoothly while the practice still operates. This keeps you in production and informed on the project, and you will still be the final decider on all issues. Using your design team and a project manager allows you to maintain the practice and the project at the highest level.

Wayne Usiak founded BDA Architecture in 1986 to specialize exclusively in animal facility design. In 1998, he formed their sister company CMP Construction to offer construction services to their design clients. Over 900 facilities have been completed to date.



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How to plan for the "pee line"

June 1, 2021

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Running a clean clinic is the dream, but it can be hard to maintain in a pet-friendly space. Here are a few design strategies to help keep the workplace glistening.

As an industry professional, you do your best to keep your clinic sparkling clean. However, there is 1 particular situation that poses a unique challenge—the notorious leg lifters! Everybody knows that accidents happen, but whether the patient is large or small, urine of any kind is still extremely damaging to certain materials. Over the course of this article, we will share knowledge about why urine interacts so negatively with your floors, walls, and other areas. We will also provide tips, tricks, and methods for protecting your clinic from the damages of pet urine. Because let's face it, when they've got to go, they've got to go!

Urine hazards

Dog urine poses a significant threat because of its chemical makeup. Although all urine is primarily water (with inorganic salts and nitrogen-rich by-products such as uric acid and creatine), dog urine is much more concentrated. Did you know urine can even etch stone? The chemicals present in your pet's urine are much more destructive.



Trying to hide a urine problem in vinyl tile by installing porcelain tile over it. (Courtesy of MD Architects)

To make things worse, urine can soak through wall and floor materials and get trapped out of reach of your cleaning efforts. Through absorption, it will penetrate the core of porous surfaces, and that is where the real problem begins.

As urine breaks down and dries, it becomes more challenging to see, let alone clean. As the remaining water evaporates, a high concentration of ammonia is left behind, and a sulfur-containing chemical is formed, producing unpleasant smells. This high concentration of ammonia is a key reason to never use cleaning products also containing ammonia on affected areas. The scent will be familiar and lead your pet to believe that it is a “safe” place for them to leave their mark. Additionally, the uric acid in dog urine has a crystal-like structure that does not dissolve well in water. The crystals that remain after the liquid dries are why cleaning with soap and water alone will not resolve the issue. Traces of urine will be left behind.



Wood flooring damaged by leg lifters and the efforts to clean up after them. (Courtesy of MD Architects)

Issues like these have led our architect design team to develop a useful design guideline we call the “pee line,” which is an imaginary line we use to indicate the worst-case scenario height for these leg lifters. It takes into consideration where urine can reach for any size of dogs, from Chihuahua to Great Dane. In our experience, the pee line occurs over 1 m above the floor, and all finishes below it need to be selected, installed, and maintained to be durable and washable enough to withstand damage from urine.

Cleaning supplies

If a furry friend does decide to urinate at an inopportune time and place, there are some products we recommend using for cleanup. A water-based grout residue remover is ideal for keeping tile floors and natural stone looking stain-free and polished. It gets into those hard-to-reach crevices where urine is likely to get trapped and keeps them looking haze-free. These products are ideal for both epoxy and cement-based grouts and will keep the tile itself looking shiny and clean.

Another option is a heavy-duty alkaline floor cleaner that eliminates tough stains and protein-based build-ups, especially on textured surfaces such as epoxy floors. These products are safe to use and go above and beyond to prevent stains from ruining your finishes.

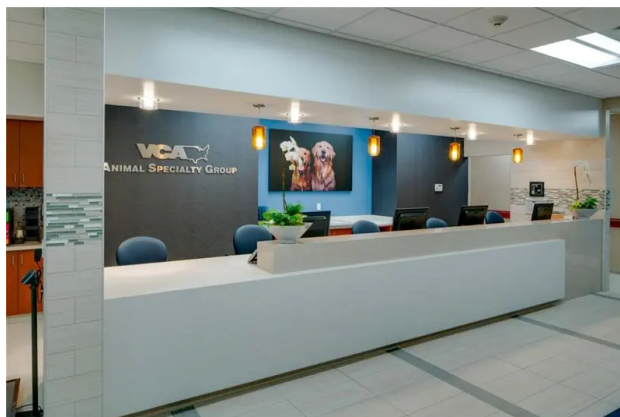
Design solution

Now that we have covered the cleanup process, we will discuss some material options proven to be reliable and able to withstand urine and liquid stains of all kinds.

As discussed above, one of the most common problem areas for pet stains is the floor. We recommend using a more durable material, such as epoxy, porcelain tile, or sheet vinyl, especially in high-traffic areas. In addition to choosing the correct materials, it is just as important to seal and install the products correctly. This will lower the absorption rate and make floors more resistant to urine and other fluids, including cleaning supplies.



Treatment room with welded sheet vinyl flooring at VCA Beech Grove Animal Hospital, Indiana. (Courtesy of Dale Pickett)



Reception desk with solid surface front and porcelain tile flooring at VCA Animal Specialty Group, San Diego, California. (Courtesy of Dale Pickett)

Keep in mind that the pee line concept extends above the floor, so it is also crucial to consider what is applied on cabinetry and other vertical surfaces. Plastic laminates are a good example of a cleanable material that most hospitals use for exam room cabinetry. When laminates are properly cleaned and protected, uric acid crystals will not be left behind to erode the material and peel away the edges and corners of surfaces. In high traffic or wet areas, metal or hard plastic corner guards can be placed on the edges to shield and better hold the material in place, keeping your area looking new over a longer time period.

There are some materials to avoid using altogether. Porous surfaces like carpet can absorb and trap fluids within the fibers and allow them to spread underneath, producing unwanted odors. Liquids move from wet to dry regions and, perhaps surprisingly, surfaces as seemingly hard as concrete and brick contain pores that confine excess liquids. When these porous materials get wet on one end, the pores begin filling with that liquid and spread throughout. Our recommendation is to stick with nonporous materials, like porcelain tile, solid surface products, or plastic laminate wherever possible.



Reception desk with plastic laminate front and porcelain tile flooring at VCA Beech Grove Animal Hospital, Indiana. (Courtesy of Emerick Construction)

The takeaway

The world of veterinary design is changing and progressing every day. We hope we can offer insights to help empower you to make the most informed decision for your practice. With an understanding of available materials and how they will perform, it will be easier to keep your clinic looking, lasting, and smelling brand-new for years to come!

Started in 2000 by Rick Renschen, MD Architects has presence from coast to coast with a national portfolio of animal care, human care, and commercial projects. The company is actively registered in 35 states and has a running list of upwards of 180 animal care projects across the country.



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