Since 2005, architecture+ has been working with the Vermont Department of Mental Health and Buildings and General Services to assist the State in recreating its mental healthcare delivery system. Dozens of options were considered, each of which distributed the State’s 54 licensed inpatient beds in various facilities across the State. In 2011, Hurricane Irene devastated Vermont and flooded the State Hospital in Waterbury, making it imperative that one of the many decentralized bed distribution models be implemented. As a result, several beds were co-located with regional hospitals and the State proceeded with the design of a new 25-bed state-run inpatient hospital in Berlin.

The new 25-bed, $23 million Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital draws on the findings of cutting-edge research regarding the ability of design to promote healing and reduce aggression in psychiatric facilities. The state-of-the-art facility houses patients with diverse diagnoses in a secure environment and provides a safe and therapeutic setting with the aesthetics of traditional Vermont design. The facility offers private bedrooms and bathrooms in small, flexible nursing units. Increased privacy reduces stress, which in turn, promotes healing. All bedrooms, recovery spaces, and offices have operable windows.

Living rooms, quiet rooms, comfort rooms, and generous on-unit dining areas are located immediately off the bedroom wings. A wide range of daytime activities are accommodated by a library, fitness room, greenhouse, art room, and visiting rooms. A sensory room designed for individual patient-focused therapy offers respite from the community-oriented therapy, allowing patients to remain off-unit. A creatively designed chapel space is flexible enough to serve as a courtroom as well as a large family visiting room. The building is arranged to create two yards that provide space for outdoor activities and also function as town greens for the patient and staff community.
Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital

Continued

architecture+ developed an interior design concept using elements from the Vermont landscape as inspiration. The finish materials and color selections create a soothing and restorative environment. Colored linoleum laid in a pattern that mimics a creek edge flows down the inpatient unit corridors, meeting “docks” at each bedroom door and stopping at wood window benches along the way. Each of the inpatient units is themed by a season with a coordinating color and icon that is repeated throughout the unit thereby reinforcing the sense of place. Patient furniture is comfortable, yet safe and durable, and coordinates seamlessly with the interior design and wayfinding systems.

architecture+: Prime Architect; Black River Design: Associated Architect

Award
Interior Design Project, Overall Winner, Design & Health International Academy Awards, 2015
Mental Health Project, Finalist, Design & Health International Academy Awards, 2015
Merit Award, American Institute of Architects, Eastern New York Chapter, 2014