

Metal Architecture

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Fitness Center Shapes Up for the Future With Contemporary Metal Vision

By Judy Ault

No pain, no gain, as they say in fitness. For Birmingham, Ala., architects Bruce Herrington and Joe Swaika of Herrington Architects it was the challenge of designing an expanded version of Cornerstone Wellness & Fitness in Clanton, Ala., in a pain-free way—and within budget—that allowed the facility to continue to serve physical therapy patients and fitness clients while the renovation/expansion took place. The one-story, 15,908-square-foot (1,478 m²) facility was completed in May 2007. Steel Built Systems, Maplesville, Ala., was the subcontractor for the project.

“The facility needed to stay open and in operation during construction,” Swaika said. “To do this, additions needed to be tied into the existing building with allowance for the individual building components to ‘move’ independently from each other.”

“We were fortunate to have a skilled general contractor in JohnsonKreis Construction, [Birmingham], that could perform the construction work while keeping the facility open and the general public safe from construction hazards,” he added. The architects’ challenge was designing an addition to two sides of the existing facility to blend together as one structure. To do this, they created a wedge design using bright-blue 26-gauge PBR metal paneling material by Metallic Building Systems, Houston. The design concept created a highly visible contemporary facility with a sloping wall system that made the exterior and interior “edgy” and highlighted the use of the metal materials.

“No other material was considered to solve

the design challenges this project posed while keeping within the design aesthetic and budget,” Herrington commented.

Better Entrance Visibility

With the existing building entrance nestled on a lower elevation of the primary road entrance, Cornerstone Wellness & Fitness needed a bright, fresh look to draw customers to its door. The Signature 300 Harbor Blue Kynar finish of the new exterior walls did the trick, creating a fresh face for the fitness center, making it highly visible to street traffic and easy to find for patients and clients.

Better Interior, Brighter Spaces


Making better use of interior spaces was the next big challenge for Herrington Architects. The bright edgy feel of the new exterior inspired the same feeling within. The original reception area had a large, open area, while the waiting area was limited. The renovations reversed this, making the reception area more efficient and waiting area more open and spacious. Now the new reception area is fresh and inviting and reflects the exterior with a continued “wedge” theme with bright-blue colors on the walls, flooring and angular reception desk.

Accessibility Problems Solved

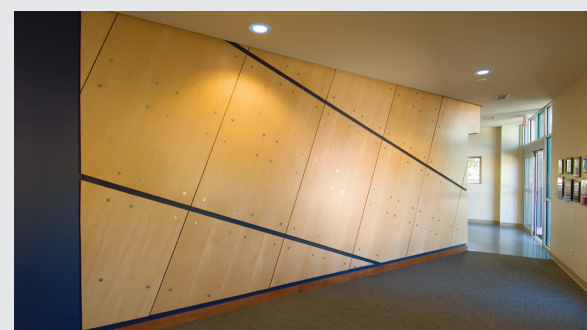
“Accessibility was a big issue for our patients and clients,” commented building owner, Barry Baker. “With the architect’s help, the new design met our concerns and included new automatic doors opening at the front entrance, a wheelchair accessible restroom in the front

of the building and convenient access to our childcare facility.” Keeping a Focus on Fitness Areas specific to cardio fitness and physical therapy were relocated and enlarged. The room’s location and orientation focused on reducing noise and traffic distractions for clients during their sessions. The architects used design elements and materials such as low walls for openness, noise reduction materials, mounted televisions and glass coatings to reduce distractions outside the work areas. The aerobics room was upgraded with durable rubber flooring, and the locker room was expanded to include changing areas and more lockers. A new gymnasium was added, complete with staging and acoustic panels for noise reduction.

Metal Materials Sharpen Design Focus

“Our challenge was to merge the old with the new and create a contemporary facility that highlighted the use of the building materials,” Swaika concluded. “The metal wedge facade gave us the focused look we wanted. Cornerstone Fitness & Wellness is ready to serve their patients and clients now and into the future.” 

Judy Ault has a degree in public relations from Auburn University, Auburn, Ala., and 20 years’ field experience in developing public relations strategies for clients. She has worked for specialty public relations and advertising firms in Dallas and Birmingham, Ala., and is currently the director of public relations at White Sky Agency/PR in Birmingham.



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