



Planning entrance lobbies

The entrance to the healthcare facility must be placed at a prominently visible location from the street

BY MANU MALHOTRA

1. The most vital part of planning the entrance lobby is the planning of the entrance itself.

Entrance lobbies in hospitals today are more than a transitional space between the outside and the inside of the building. They are the starting point of the healthcare experience. First impressions are often lasting impressions, and the lobbies seek to impress upon the visitors, the brand im-

age of the organisation and the principles behind the facility. Increasingly, the lobby like the healthcare industry itself is becoming much like the ones in the hospital-ity industry.

The most vital part of planning the entrance lobby is the planning of the entrance itself. The entrance to the health-

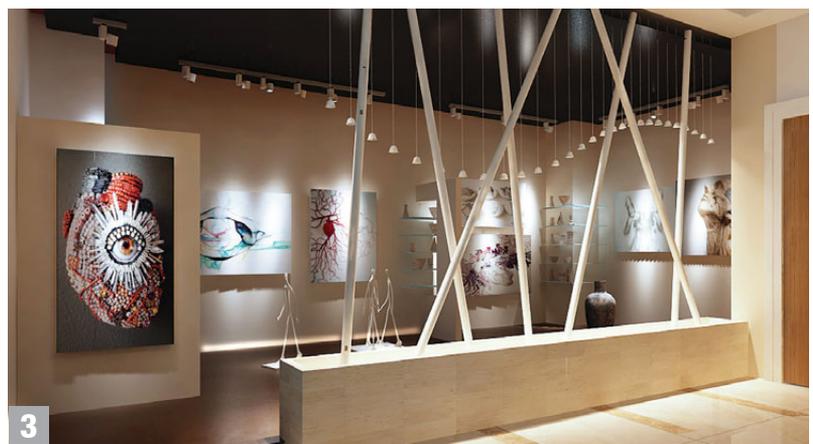
care facility must be placed at a prominently visible location from the street and the planning must be welcoming and friendly. At the same time, it should not be in conflict with the entrance to the emergency section, which also requires clear visibility and unhampered access. Signage often plays an important role in the segregation of the different entry points. A clear traffic pattern with adequate visitor parking and drop-off areas near both the entrances is also equally important.

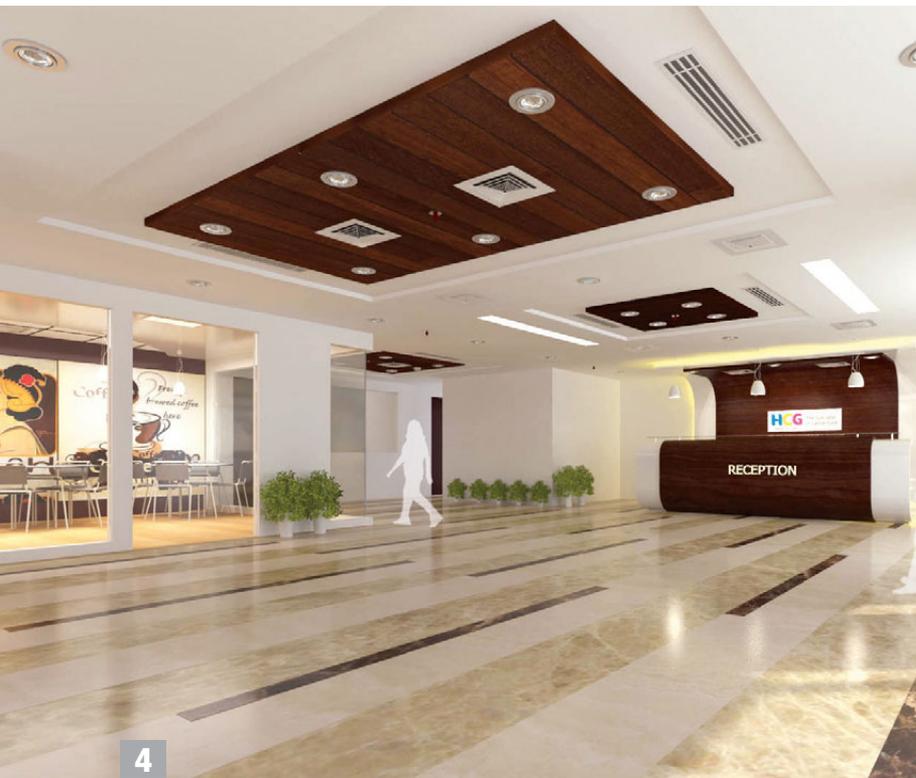
Lobbies, most importantly, need to be clutter free. This becomes even more important as lobbies today include a range of activities apart from their integral functions which are to act as a first point contact: information centre and a waiting area. The lobbies also house restaurants, cafes, pharmacies, banking facilities and shops. These commercial activities help the visitor by providing easy access to services such as banking and medicine.

High priority items should be placed in points of greater visibility and these may in turn help raise the revenues of the hospital due to its positioning. Keeping in mind the diverse functions that are a part of the lobby, it is important that the space is clearly demarcated into visual zones and visual pathways. This helps the visitor chart a map of the lobby in his mind, thus preventing

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3. Waiting in the lobby has now become more hospitable and comfortable.





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disorientation and intimidation.

Segregating registration, admitting and billing from the lobby is a good measure to take as these are activities that may sometimes involve heated conversations between the customer, who is under stress, and the hospital staff. Such transactions are more desirable to be made behind the front end- which is the lobby. The lobby thus becomes primarily an information centre, a first point-of-contact which guides the visitors in their desired directions.

Another segregation device is to segregate the entrance lobby from the lobbies for the emergency and the out-patient departments. This helps in reducing the waiting space required in the entrance lobby, and, more importantly, reduces the habitation of the lobby, making it seem more vast and expansive.

Waiting spaces, which are one of the primary functions of the lobby, no longer consist of rows upon rows of waiting chairs. Waiting in the lobby has now

become more hospitable and comfortable with plush cushioned seating in interesting colours and arrangements suited to conversations and to respect the privacy of patients and their family. The waiting spaces may be further enlivened by the creation of art galleries or exhibition spaces. These may be used to showcase art by patients or local artists.

The out-patient pharmacy needs to be at a visible location from the exit point of the out-patient department. This will ensure higher footfalls in the pharmacy. Branding and signage of the pharmacy are also important aspects of the design which impact footfalls. The user experience can be enhanced by providing a prescription desk which will help the customer understand the prescription, providing him with a sense of being protected, something which can be very vital to ailing patients.

Cafeterias may be a part of the brand of the healthcare provider or their collaborator. In any event, the cafeterias and restaurants should merge into the overall architectural and design theme of the facility, yet being an easily identifiable stand-alone entity within the hospital. Through the use of colour, signage and lighting, this can be achieved.

The interiors of the entrance lobby can use a wide range of materials, colours and textures. The palette created needs to be in harmony with the design principle of the building and the nature of the facility. Thus facilities such as speciality care hospitals that focus on the treatment of disease may have a comforting and warm palette, while facilities such as paediatric centres and mother-and-child centres may have vibrant entrance lobbies that are full of rich colour and texture. 

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