

## NATURE AS A CRITICAL ELEMENT OF PATIENT-CENTERED CARE

New hospital at University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center brings trees to its front door

Meticulously designed around the needs of patients and their families, the William P. Clements Jr. University Hospital at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas is a state of the art facility. Through innovative planning that was five years in the making, patients' needs are met outside, on the hospital grounds, as much as inside the building itself. Cutting edge

landscape design throughout the hospital campus is a cornerstone to the innovation throughout the facility. Described by the UT Southwestern Medical Center as a "milestone in defining the role of the physical environment in the hospital of the 21st Century," the landscape creates a visually appealing and emotionally comforting outdoor environment. The plaza at the main entrance to the hos-



technology such as videoconferencing in each patient room enhances communication between members of a patient's care team, and the thoughtful landscape that surrounds the facility – including a large meadow and healing garden – provides patients with a healing, calming, natural environment. The meeting point between the nature outside and the entrance of the building is a tree-laden, paved plaza that serves as a dining terrace, inviting people inside and bringing nature along right up to the edge of the building.

Designed by Peter Walker Partners (PWP), the land-

pital is located near the corner of Harry Hines Boulevard and Plantation Drive, and functions as a bridge between the outdoors and the indoors. Surrounded on three sides by the hospital building, it includes nine Bald Cypress trees that emerge from the paved surface, with tables and chairs inviting patients and visitors to pause and enjoy the landscape.

The Bald Cypress trees were selected for the plaza and the adjacent meadow for their distinct form as well as hardiness to the area. The nine trees on the plaza carry over the geometric arrangement of the trees in the

meadow, aligned to provide view corridors from the hospital as well as drivers passing by on the road. Harmony between the form and growth of the Bald Cypresses in the plaza and those in the meadows was essential to the design, and because the paved surface of the plaza meant different planting conditions as compared to the soil in the meadow, additional design measures needed to be taken to create the same growing environment for both sets of trees.

PWP specified Silva Cells to meet these soil volume goals. Conard Lindgren, a landscape architect with PWP,

Center has positioned itself at the forefront of collaborative, creative, and thoughtful patient care. The patient-centric environment at the hospital is enhanced by the positive, healing, and calming impact of the green spaces and gardens, and the trees on the dining terrace plaza provide an inviting bridge from this natural retreat into the building's entrance. The landscape is incorporated with the hospital in a way that meaningfully recognizes the role of nature in aiding recovery from physical ailments. Over the years, these trees will mature and provide an increasingly restorative environment for all who visit the facility.



elaborates further: "The [Silva Cell] suspended paving system was designed to provide the same volume and type of soil to the Bald Cypress trees planted in the paved dining terrace as those planted in the open-soil meadow. This way, as they mature, their similar growing conditions will enable them to match in form and size, preserving their geometric arrangement."

The Silva Cells were installed in a one layer system, extending to the edge of these squares. All together 540 Silva Cell Frames and 540 Silva Cell Decks were installed on the plaza, bringing 600 cubic feet (17 cubic meters) of soil to each of the nine Bald Cypress trees.

With the careful design of this new facility provided by PWP, the University of Texas Southwestern Medical

#### **Installation Summary**

Average soil volume per tree: 600 ft<sup>3</sup> (17 m<sup>3</sup>)

Number of Trees: 9

Total Silva Cells: 540 Frames, 540 Decks

Installation Date: September 2014

Installation type: Trees

Project Site: Plaza

Project Designer: Peter Walker Partners Landscape Architecture

Contractors: Choate USA

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