VON DUPRIN®

Case Study

Care Center in the Park

Protecting Patients Through Design and Compliance at Altru Health System

Altru Health System has grown to become one of the largest health networks serving northeast North Dakota and northwest Minnesota. In January 2025, they opened a new 550,000-square-foot state-of-the-art hospital in Grand Forks, ND. Designed by JLG Architects with guidance from Altru's Facility Planning Committee, the facility is envisioned as a "Care Center in the Park." The design carefully balances soothing, patient-focused spaces with efficient workflows that support staff and enhance the overall care experience.

The hospital's planning phase began in 2017, but was temporarily paused during COVID-19. When work resumed in 2021, the design was reshaped by the lessons of that global event. "These changes include elevated expectations from patients and families, enhanced reliance on technology, broader integration of technology and more stringent infrastructure requirements to ensure continuous care for patients and families," said Josh Kehrwald, AIA, Managing Principal Architect, JLG Architects. With this approach, Altru's new facility is well prepared to respond to today's needs and any future health care challenges.

"Hospitals are complex projects, and the challenges of navigating a pandemic and working within an active health care campus are immense," said Todd R. Medd, AIA, Healthcare Practice Studio Leader at JLG Architects. "I'm proud of how our team overcame these challenges to expand the level of care and build on Altru's vision of a world-class 'Hospital in the Park.'"

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Exit Devices Support Egress and Code Compliance

While the design team gave precise attention to each architectural detail to shape a restorative, dignified and welcoming environment, code compliance was also a top consideration. Hospitals are high-stakes environments where patients may have limited mobility, sensory challenges or cognitive impairments, making safe evacuation during emergencies a complex task. Consequently, proper product specification and adherence with strict fire and life safety codes is a fundamental component of a health care facility's life-safety strategy.

> In large scale health care settings like Altru, **EXIT DEVICES MUST DO MORE THAN MEET CODE.** They need to withstand the constant flow of people, equipment and activity that defines a 24/7 facility.

Von Duprin's® 98/99 Series exit devices contribute to the comprehensive egress safety strategy at Altru's new hospital facility. The high-performance, wide stile heavy-duty push pad hardware is mounted on the egress side of emergency doors at Altru in multiple locations, including the emergency department, to provide fast and intuitive egress for occupants by simplifying operation.

Typically, traditional door hardware on exit doors, such as knobs or levers, can slow movement during emergencies with their two-step process, which includes twisting a knob and pushing down handles. These additional actions may increase stress and confusion among occupants and cause delays during high stress evacuation.

Instead, push-pad devices like the 98/99 Series exit device remove the need for precise action, like twisting or grasping. They allow occupants to move predictably and efficiently through crowded hallways and help eliminate delays. This seamless egress can make the difference between orderly evacuation and chaos, supporting Altru's overarching goal of protecting patients, visitors and staff.

Durability for High-Traffic Environments

In large scale health care settings like Altru, exit devices must do more than meet code. They

need to withstand the constant flow of people, equipment and activity that defines a 24/7 facility. Hallways, emergency rooms and entry points experience continuous use, often with heavy equipment or stretchers moving through doors, placing extraordinary demands on hardware.

Von Duprin's 98/99 Series exit devices are engineered to meet these rigorous performance requirements. Built for heavy-duty use, they feature a modern touchbar for high-traffic conditions while the deadlatching latchbolt adds an extra layer of security. Importantly, the exit device is certified to the highest industry standards, including ANSI/BHMA A156.3 Grade 1, indicating the hardware's ability to successfully endure 500,000 loaded cycles with no loss of operation or performance. Additional tests evaluate the exit devices' strength under pushing, pulling and turning at the trim, testifying for its dependable performance in the most demanding scenarios.

For emergency compliance, these devices meet ANSI/UL 305 standards for panic hardware and ANSI/UL 10C requirements for fire-rated doors, providing peace of mind for facility managers and staff.

Effortless, Intuitive Ease of Use in High Pressure Departments

In addition to compliance and durability, ease of use is critical for safety and workflow efficiency in high-pressure areas like emergency departments. Staff often need to move quickly while transporting patients, medical supplies or life-saving equipment, and traditional door hardware can slow this process.

Addressing this need, the Von Duprin 98/99 Series exit devices offer a simple push or lean operation that ensures almost anyone can depart quickly and intuitively. This reduces delays and allows smooth, uninterrupted movement through exit paths, even when hands are full or occupants are under pressure. Ease of use also extends to patients and visitors, who may vary widely in mobility, cognitive ability or familiarity with the facility.

By helping ensure anyone can instinctively operate the door without instructions or extra effort, Von Duprin 98/99 Series exit devices support simple, predictable hardware operations. This capability aligns with Altru's larger goal of a practical, user-focused health care environment that helps medical professionals work efficiently while safeguarding all occupants.

> In addition to compliance and durability, **EASE OF USE IS CRITICAL FOR SAFETY AND WORKFLOW EFFICIENCY** in high-pressure areas like emergency departments.

> Every design detail, down to the panic devices on exit doors, **REFLECTS A COMMITMENT TO SUPPORTING PATIENT EXPERIENCE** and workforce efficiency.

Design Flexibility for an Evolving Health Care Facility

Health care environments have unique operational needs and evolving patient care requirements. While a facility may be envisioned to serve its community for generations, its fire and life safety systems may need to evolve alongside it to remain effective and compliant.

With more than a century of expertise in designing fire-exit solutions, Von Duprin understands how critical adaptability and flexibility are in health care design. The company's 98/99 Series Exit Devices embody this principle. Its modular design as well as a variety of field-configurable options and retrofit kits allow facilities to adapt or upgrade the devices as requirements evolve.

The forward-looking capability can help health care facilities maintain high safety and compliance standards today. And when required, the facility can respond to evolving regulations, technological advancements and changes in patient care needs, all while maintaining seamless functionality and consistent reliability. This helps future-proof hospital facilities for years to come.

By combining long-standing reliability with forward-looking designs, Von Duprin provides hospitals like Altru with a future-ready solution that not only meets today's life-safety standards but can also grow with the facility's evolving needs.

A Hospital Built for the Future

At Altru, products from Von Duprin, an Allegion brand, work in tandem with solutions from many other brands under Allegion's portfolio, including AD Systems, Unicel Architectural, Schlage, LCN, Technical Glass Products (TGP) and others. Using multiple solutions from a single company can simplify specifications while ensuring seamless integration, reliability and performance across a health care facility. Every design detail, down to the panic devices on exit doors, reflects a commitment to supporting patient experience and workforce efficiency. "Caring for our community has changed significantly since the 1970s, when the original hospital was constructed," said Kehrwald. "This new hospital enables Altru to continue to deliver world-class health care for this community for the next 50 years."

Project Information

Project location: Grand Forks, ND

Architect: JLG Architects

Exit device: 98/99 Series Exit Device (360 qty)

Date completed: January 2025

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