

AIA INDIANA HEALTHCARE DESIGN AWARDS

COLUMBUS REGIONAL HEALTH
AT NEXUSPARK





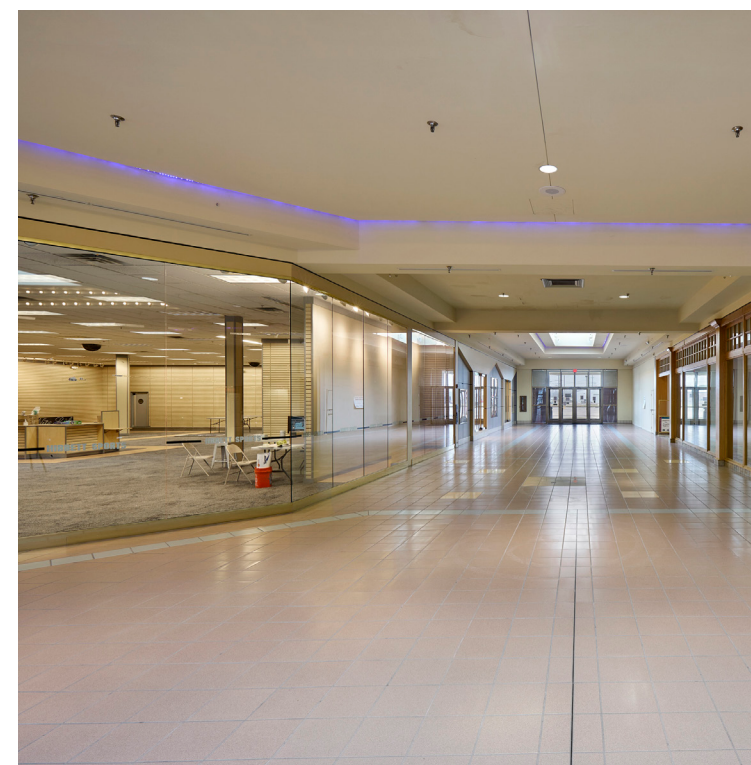
NexusPark: A Community-Centered Transformation

Five years ago, the heart of Columbus, Indiana, was a space slowly losing its pulse. The Fair Oaks Mall, once a regional draw, had become a familiar symbol of decline—an aging retail complex with vacant storefronts and a struggling surrounding neighborhood. But what some saw as a dying commercial center, the City of Columbus and Columbus Regional Health (CRH) saw as potential: a canvas for community wellness, resilience, and regeneration.

What emerged from that vision is NexusPark, a project that redefines the very idea of healthcare infrastructure. It is not merely a building or a campus—it is a convergence point. A destination. A revitalized community cornerstone where health, movement, recreation, commerce, and public life intersect.

From the outset, the design team faced a rare and complex challenge: to reimagine a 35-acre failing mall as a comprehensive, mixed-use, health-centered urban anchor. Within its 150,000 square feet of dedicated healthcare space, NexusPark consolidates 15 distinct medical practices, many of which had previously been scattered across the region. These practices—ranging from pediatrics to OB/GYN to audiology to physical and occupational therapy—needed their own identities, workflows, and operational ecosystems, yet had to coexist within a cohesive, intuitive environment.

Our design solution embraced both complexity and clarity. We employed a meticulous planning process rooted in empathy mapping, physician and patient interviews, community listening sessions, and post-occupancy evaluations of previous CRH facilities.



SUBMISSION CATEGORY: Adaptive Reuse/
Renovation/Interior Architecture

PROJECT TYPE: Healthcare Clinics

PROJECT ADDRESS: 2100 25th Street,
Columbus, IN 47201

COMPLETION: January 2024

Simulation tools, including FlexSim modeling, allowed us to explore the operational implications of design choices such as centralized versus decentralized registration. Every decision was data-driven and patient-centered.

At the core of the architectural concept is an “on-stage/off-stage” spatial configuration—a model drawn from performance theory and adapted to healthcare. Each exam room has two entrances: one for patients and one for clinicians. Public corridors and waiting spaces are calm, legible, and filled with natural light, while clinical zones are efficient, interconnected, and private. This approach not only improves wayfinding and patient experience but also streamlines staff operations and reduces fatigue.

The material palette was chosen to evoke warmth, cleanliness, and resilience. Durable, low-VOC surfaces, sound-masking ceiling systems, and biophilic design elements—such as wood accents, natural textures, and skylights—create a sensory environment that reduces anxiety and enhances comfort. Large windows and clerestories illuminate therapy spaces with daylight, supporting circadian health and energy performance alike.

Behind the walls, mechanical and electrical systems were upgraded to meet the demands of modern healthcare while embracing energy efficiency. High-efficiency rooftop units with zoning and demand-controlled ventilation ensure optimal air quality and comfort. LED lighting systems, daylight sensors, and occupancy controls further reduce energy use, while infrastructure supports future flexibility—critical in a field where technological and care delivery models evolve rapidly.

Accessibility was a non-negotiable. Every square foot of NexusPark is navigable by individuals of all abilities. Entrances are wide and unobstructed, signage is multi-modal and intuitive, and patient rooms feature accessible equipment and furnishings. These elements go beyond code—they reflect a commitment to inclusive, universal design.



