

**Tenant-improved retail space for primary care** is far less expensive than medical office buildings designed for more specialized care.

With so much retail space going vacant across the country, many healthcare systems are taking advantage of the reduced rental costs of these spaces to locate clinics away from their hospital campus, and closer to the patients they serve. Tenant-improved retail space for primary care also offer long-term benefits: lower rents, adjacencies to other community services and businesses, and strong brand recognition due to locations near busy thoroughfares or on public transportation lines. However, these conversions require careful planning with an understanding of how to blend both efficient clinic design with the nuances common to retail space. When transforming a commercial space into a healthcare outpost, HED has identified three critical categories to not only save design time and costs but to maximize the return on your investment over the long-term.

**CURRENT AND FUTURE STATE NEEDS ASSESSMENT** 

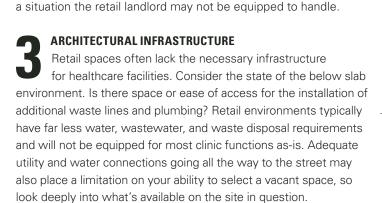
crucial to conduct a full-range needs assessment addressing what is needed in the next 3 to 5 years, but also your service line may currently need primary care for young families in your community, but as your patient population base ages your future need may necessitate accommodating health issues for older adults.

A well-defined needs assessment and intended program can radically impact what you need to look for in a former retail environment - space allocation, anticipated equipment, patient flow, and applicable regulations. Once the program and needs are clearly defined, it becomes easy to eliminate properties based on the next two considerations.

**OPERATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE** Once your needs are fully anticipated, you are now in a position to understand how healthcare is delivered to everything from hours of operation to delivery of secured



Before embarking on any retail-to-clinic conversion, it's considering the 5 to 15 year timeframe, depending on your lease;



For example, a review of the proposed retail space should

and lighting will be available for staff or patients who may be

medications such as vaccines; furthermore, the removal of

seen in the clinic late or even on weekends. While the delivery

of supplies is a common function for retail centers, the supplies

hazardous materials needs consideration when leasing a space.

One nuance clients don't always consider is security; a clinic

may see patients who are stressed to begin with and from the

parking lot to the doctor's office unexpected stresses can create

coming in to a clinic may be restricted, sterile items or controlled

consider how 'after hours' is defined in terms of what ventilation

Airflow is another key consideration. Most retail spaces lack the HVAC systems to turnover or filter air to code requirements depending on the clinics function. But even if the clinic is performing less invasive services or mostly administrative functions, consider that most retail spaces are a single large area with small support spaces in the back, so HVAC and electrical

upgrades will likely be needed to control temperatures in any new areas created, including more lighting, installed equipment, etc. Selecting a retail space with ample floor-to-floor heights might also be necessary when upgrading HVAC systems, and a consistent structural bay dimension column-to-column will also give you greater flexibility in your systems improvements, equipment placements, and floorplan as the project progresses.

Converting an empty retail space into a healthcare clinic is a complex endeavor that requires a blend of architectural, regulatory, and healthcare industry expertise. By meticulously defining your needs early, you can easily select an available retail space that will convert faster and more efficiently so your investment can prioritize patient well-being and staff efficiency while serving your communities well.



By Sharon Woodworth, AFAIA, LEED AP BD+C, ACHA Healthcare Market Sector Leader Explore more market and design insights at www.hed.design/insights

differently in a retail versus medical campus setting. This relates supplies and to security itself

