

UNIVERSITY HEALTH SYSTEMS WOMEN AND CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

San Antonio, Texas



The expansion of the University Health campus brought with it a state-of-the-art Women's and Children's Tower, a centerpiece for patient- and family-centered care in San Antonio. As part of this growth, Rippe Associates was engaged to reimagine foodservice for the entire campus. Relocating the main kitchen to the podium provided the opportunity to replace an outdated facility with a forward-looking operation capable of supporting more than 844 beds and serving multiple patient towers. A new retail servery was placed at a highly visible and accessible level, ensuring convenience for staff, visitors, and patients while integrating seamlessly with the hospital's public spaces.

Serving nearly 900 patient trays per meal required an operation that was both efficient and resilient. Rippe designed three dedicated traylines to handle peak patient volumes, with transport supported by dedicated elevators to the upper patient floors. The foodservice operation also incorporated roomservice and scheduled meal delivery options tailored to patient needs across the Sky, Rio, and Horizon towers.

Details

Opening Date: July 2023

Equipment Cost: \$5,500,000

Hospital Beds: 844

Trays per Meal: 700–900

Total Square Feet: 37,000 SF

Scope

Master plan led to full design of the department including the physician's lounge, retail dining and the relocation of the main kitchen. Plan featured high-capacity patient service, a modern retail servery, and future-ready design for robotics.

On the retail side, administration challenged the design team to accommodate both the in-house operator and multiple franchise partners. The final solution created independent, self-sufficient retail stations with their own storage and sanitation, supported by a dedicated service entrance to streamline back-of-house operations.

Long-term operational efficiency guided every design decision. Pathways were intentionally designed to accommodate future robotics integration for both meal delivery and soiled tray return, requiring wider aisles and more open kitchen layouts. The back-of-house was organized with receiving and dock functions at the rear, production at the core, and patient services positioned at the front, ensuring logical and efficient workflow from receiving to service. This not only minimized travel distances and labor needs but also optimized food quality and service times.

This LEED Gold–certified project demonstrates how thoughtful foodservice design can align with broader institutional goals of sustainability, operational efficiency, and patient-centered care. Beyond its technical achievements, the Women’s and Children’s Hospital foodservice program has earned national recognition, including honors from IIDA and CODA Healthcare. With a combination of high-volume patient meal delivery and a dynamic retail environment, this project reflects Rippe Associates’ commitment to creating flexible, innovative solutions for complex healthcare campuses.

