

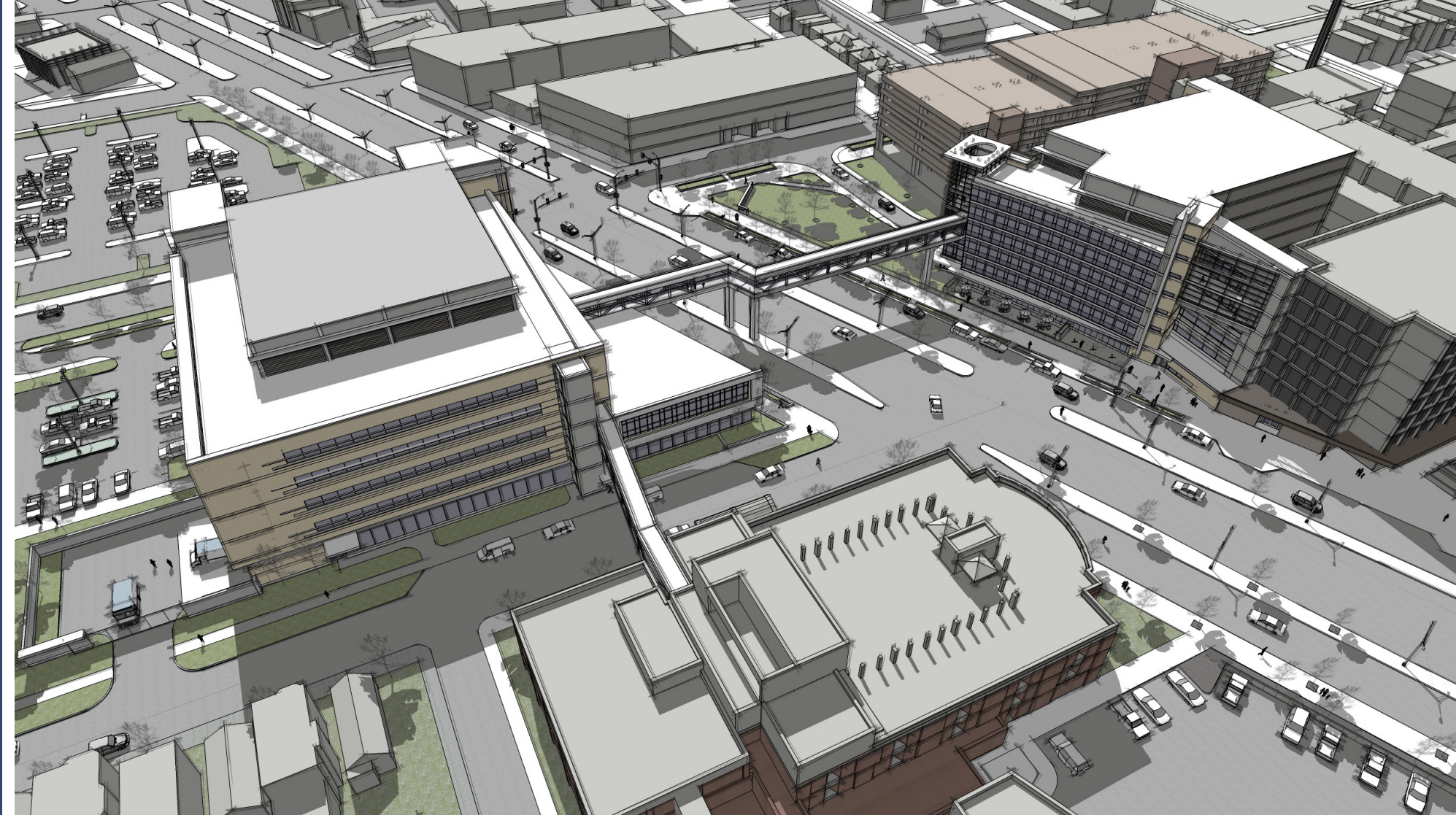
The Calculus Underneath Effective Crisis Mitigation Planning

Strategies to Prepare Your Healthcare
Organization for the Next Emergency



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From preparing for an initial surge of COVID patients at your hospital to decommissioning emergency treatment tents after the curve flattened, to constantly replenishing your PPP stockpiles and rescheduling elective surgeries, every healthcare organization is working overtime to provide quality care in the “new normal” pandemic environment. And, like the COVID-19 virus, there is no immediate cure for pandemic fatigue – but there are steps you can take now to help inoculate your organization from the effects of the next crisis.

While it may not be another pandemic, one thing is certain – market disruptions will continue to occur – and the viability of your organization to continue to provide care for your patients depends on your ability to respond quickly and decisively. Below are planning suggestions to help your organization be prepared for life in a post pandemic market economy.

Set priorities – but not in stone.

It is going to become more important for healthcare organizations to be strategic about where they spend their money. Due to the 3-month moratorium on elective surgeries, many hospitals now face decreased revenues. This combined with the continued need to invest in PPP has placed considerable strain on capital. Now is the time to understand and clearly define your organization’s priorities. Begin by identifying the biggest need for each facility in your system. Then address those needs strategically in a way that maximizes value, while minimizing expenses. With operational improvements, for example, you are not just looking at space, but also how everything works in that space. In many cases, hospitals have more than enough square footage, unfortunately it may not be configured as efficiently as possible. Think strategically and critically about how you spend the limited capital dollars

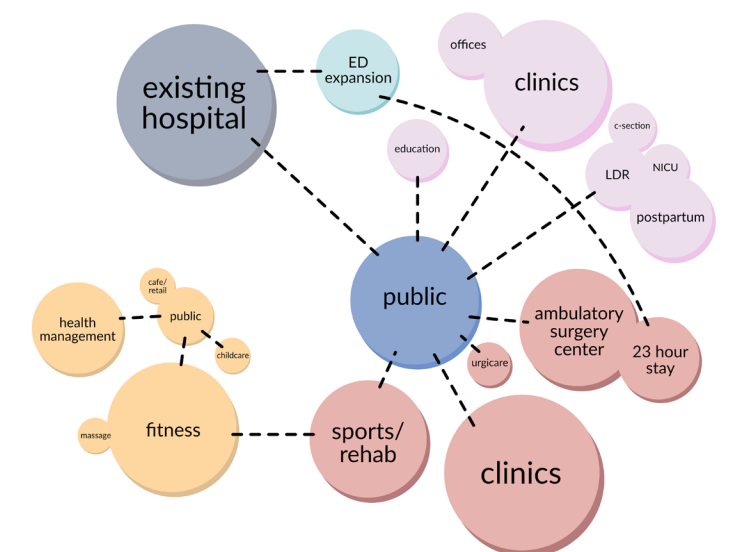
you have to leverage the most value. Set clear priorities – but do not set them in stone. Revisit them quarterly in order to build flexibility into your thinking so that you can adapt to future changes.

Identify the variables.

Planning and projections are only as good as the information it is based on. Ask yourself the following questions: Do you have the right amount of information? Is it accurate? Does it account for future growth? What are the critical variables that need to be identified? With all of the information and statistics available because of the pandemic, keep up to date on the data that matters. Examine the data and numbers of what a project not just in the next year, but what impact it will have on revenue and staffing five, ten, fifteen years in the future. One key variable is growth. Chart and project growth based on historic patterns and apply

ABOVE | Sinai Health System Campus Master Plan and future state growth recommendations.

BELOW | Space mapping - exploring the flexibility of connectivity and adjacencies.





LEFT | A sketch of a dense urban hospital exploring the connectivity to the urban fabric, and the vertical flexibility of space.

RIGHT | UCHealth Steadman Hawkins Clinic Denver, Englewood, CO. With site space located on 8.26-acres, this new health center provides a robust sports performance program including physical and occupational therapy, surgeries, imaging and clinic appointments.



that data to project decisions. If the project does not make economic sense based on historic data trends, it will make less sense when the unexpected occurs.

Remember to focus on BOTH the trees and the forest.

So many healthcare organizations are focused on day-to-day issues —putting fires out and delivering quality care (focusing on the trees)—that while the wheels may be spinning, they do not always see where they are going. It is important to take time to step back and look at the bigger picture (the forest) and develop a strategic master campus plan as well as a financial and market projection plan. Too many organizations look at them as separate and distinct planning activities, but it is important to address them equally. Visualize all of the components in a holistic and comprehensive way. This is the best methodology for developing short-, mid- and long-range plans and goals. It is a fluid process—one you must continue to refine and revise.

Remember to regularly course correct.

Whether you are conducting short-, mid- or long-range planning scenarios, remember to include course correction strategies, but be mindful of not “over correcting’. Be cognizant of swinging from one extreme to another. An example of this would be hospitals during the pandemic that ordered large numbers of ventilators, without understanding the impact on storage and maintenance. The goal is to plan for the future, while not mortgaging the present. Anticipate what may be coming, but in a strategic manner. Take one step at a time and do not make drastic changes in response to an immediate issue. React in a way that is mindful and tactical. Think about the trickle-down effect of every decision. View the planning process as a chess match – try and think five moves ahead. This approach minimizes potential negative downstream impacts, which may influence future decisions or contribute unintended incremental change.

Invite other perspectives.

Approach your strategic planning from an interdisciplinary perspective by inviting additional voices to the table. While it is important to get input from hospital staff and department heads —frontline staff who understand the facility and the protocols—it is important to bring in a fresh perspective as well. Different viewpoints add value. Consider including former patients or family representatives to obtain a better understanding how your customers perceive your organization and initiatives. Invite community leaders to participate. Consider including social anthropologists who study patterns of behavior in human societies and cultures. Their insights can be especially insightful as hospital systems migrate from episodic acute care to promoting well-care. Include representatives on your planning team that have experienced different types of emergencies: fires, earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, tornadoes active shooter, cyber attacks. Their input and first-hand experience may provide valuable insights to your planning. Start a brainstorming session on the

types of crises: hurricanes, tornadoes fires, pandemics—mass casualty events. Put together a risk assessment of those crises as they relate to your specific geography. Assess each crisis individually, starting with the most significant—for example, the pandemic—and work your way down.

Leverage all available data.

Many other industries use Big Data and Artificial Intelligence (AI) to better understand consumer preferences and identify trends. Google, Amazon, and Facebook have leveraged their data gathering and associated algorithm number crunching with considerable success. While some hospitals have begun to use Big Data and AI based on their EMR data to facilitate stocking and materials management, few have used it in strategic planning. However, the COVID-19 pandemic may be the catalyst to change that in the future. In the six short months of the virus being in the US, entities from all sectors of the healthcare industry have moved quickly to leverage their big data assets

and better understand how to respond to COVID-19. According to Health IT Analytics, researchers have utilized big data analytics tools to forecast possible constraints on hospital capacity and resources. A team from Cedars-Sinai recently developed a machine learning model that can predict data points related to the COVID-19 pandemic and predict staffing needs. This acceptance and implementation of analytical data can support scenario development in strategic planning.

Expect the unexpected.

Think about the compounding effects of two (or several) different things that can happen at once. For example, what happens when you are in the middle of a pandemic and a hurricane hits? Do not make the mistake of assuming crises occur independently. It is best to look at the worst case multiple crisis scenarios and identify options if they happen.

Look to other industries and partnerships.

During the early months of the pandemic, when bed capacity became a critical issue, several hospitals reached out to hospitality chains to investigate overflow capacity for patients and caregivers. Prior to the pandemic, the healthcare industry had successfully leveraged lessons learned from the automotive industry and incorporated Lean principles into both operations and the design of new facilities. Due to increased pressure brought by value-based payment initiatives and other changes, it is important that healthcare organizations form partnerships with different types of

providers, as well as community organizations focused on population health. Get creative with cross-industry and multi-group crisis mitigation plans. Investigate how other customer-based industries are preparing for the future.

Consider climate change.

With the daily warnings regarding a very active hurricane season and once-in-a-lifetime climate events like fire tornados and mudslides due to torrential rains becoming regular occurrences, it is important to consider the impact of climate change when conducting crisis mitigation planning. Do not focus solely on rising temperatures and rising sea levels, as some states like Florida have already implemented excellent resiliency plans. Focus on planning for the secondary effects of climate change, especially climate migration. Demographics may fluctuate considerably as people move from locations; they cannot occupy anymore because of climate change. Climate change also impacts infectious diseases, because as it gets warmer and warmer disease-carrying insects will cover larger and larger areas. Mosquitoes and other biting insects transmit many of the most important, devastating human infectious diseases, including malaria, dengue fever, chikungunya, and West Nile virus. Economic development and cooler temperatures have largely kept mosquito-borne diseases out of wealthier Northern Hemisphere countries, but climate change promises to tip the scales in the other direction, as has recently been seen in Zika virus cases in Florida and other southern US states.

Focus on flexibility.

One shortcoming to crisis mitigation planning is that it can lead to inflexibility. Many people view the planning as defining concrete solutions to potential crisis events. The key is to stay nimble and allow your plans and facilities to adapt. Rather than identifying solutions, establish guidelines that enable you to change and react to any situation. Guidelines allow your team to be both visionary and practical by aligning the capital budget available with the future growth and potential events that could impact both.

The following examples illustrate how implementing the above planning suggestions can help healthcare organizations navigate between short term, mid-term and long-term planning:

A nationally recognized comprehensive cancer care health provider’s campus had grown organically over time and contributed to issues with adjacencies and logistics. Due to the increase in surgical volume, the surgeons had requested a dedicated surgeon’s lounge. The organization’s internal facilities group identified a 3,000 SF space adjacent to the OR platform.Before proceeding, the planning and design team investigated current and future OR projections and hiring plans for future surgeons and residents and concluded that the space would not accommodate the projected growth and that it would best be utilized as expansion space for another purpose. The design team offered projected growth data to stakeholders to further evaluate the location under consideration. As a result, the plans for a surgeon’s lounge were paused until a more appropriate

location could be found.

An urban hospital planning a future lab expansion needed to quickly bring on a COVID 19 testing lab on site and their facilities group recommended it be located where the future lab expansion was to be constructed. After the planning and design team reviewed the future lab program requirements, the COVID 19 testing lab would have severely limited lab module efficiencies and future operations therefore it needed to be strategically placed so that it would not impede any future renovation work. This was accomplished by looking at the adjacent spaces, and aligning the programmatic needs with the existing column grid.

Both are examples of how seeing facilities from a different perspective and understanding the drivers underneath effective planning can create opportunities and positively impact future growth.

The COVID-19 pandemic has taught healthcare organizations the importance of planning and being prepared for crisis scenarios. As we all wait for a vaccine and the post pandemic “new normal”, now is an opportune time to look back on the lessons learned and apply them to future scenarios with **the calculus underneath effective crisis mitigation planning.**

LEFT | Sports Medicine Center, Kansas City, MO, The culmination of planning brought to fruition the progressive ideas of all involved in the project and will serve the community at large.

FRONT COVER | Night view of the proposed future state growth plan for the Sinai Health System in Chicago, Illinois.



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