

# OBSERVED

From a converted chocolate factory in Newark, New Jersey, to a former dairy barn in Atlanta, our tour of new and noteworthy projects begins here.



The sloping south facade of Bloorview Kids Rehab, in Toronto, boasts a series of accessible terraces for hospital patients (see following page).

Tom Alban

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materials

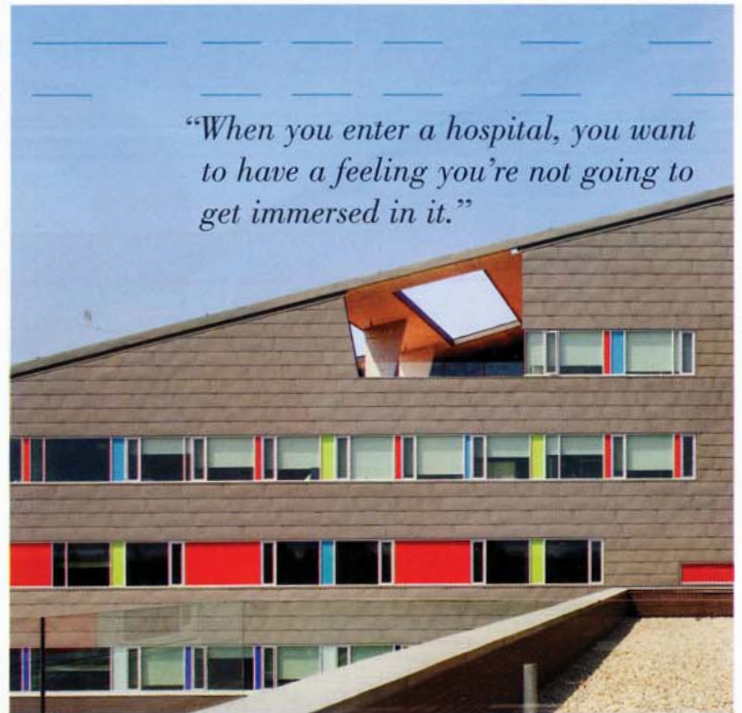
accessibility

training wheels

## Health and Happiness

A rehabilitation hospital in Toronto is colorful, comfortable, and child-friendly.

As you walk through the front door of Bloorview Kids Rehab, the largest children's rehabilitation hospital in Canada, the first things you see are a tiled wall and a comfy-looking couch. It's not exactly a grand entrance, but as you step into the tight lobby area you might notice that those tiles are limestone, that there's an art installation set into the wall, and that a reception desk is built of lustrous cherry. In other words, it has a small scale and subtle luxury—not qualities you expect to find in a 358,000-square-foot health-care facility.



*“When you enter a hospital, you want to have a feeling you’re not going to get immersed in it.”*

Colored glass panels bring some playfulness to the zinc facade.



Patient facilities include outdoor terraces and a swimming pool. Above: Rehabilitation equipment lines a wide corridor.

Which is exactly the point, says architect Terry Montgomery, of Toronto firm Montgomery Sisam. “Most hospitals have a big atrium, and that gives the wrong impression,” he says. “I think when you enter a place like a hospital, you want to have a feeling you’re not going to get immersed in it.” Especially if you’re a child recovering from a traumatic injury and coming in for years of rehab, a typical story among the patients at Bloorview. Its new building, completed last year by Montgomery Sisam and Stantec Architecture in a joint venture, creates a comfortable and child-friendly environment by breaking a few conventions of health-care design.

Some judicious spending on materials helps set the tone. The most public spaces, like the lobby, get slate or maple hardwood, though 90 percent of the hospital’s floors are linoleum (laid with bright, colorful accents). Then there’s the form of the building itself. Montgomery—who’s proud that his 30-year-old firm has won awards for bridges and houses as well as hospitals—convinced Bloorview to keep its site on a midtown ravine and build up six stories. In hospitals “the tendency is to sprawl out,” Montgomery says. “People want everything on one floor. But if we had done that, we wouldn’t have had as many views of the ravine.”

The best place to see those is “the bridge,” a narrow column of glazed public spaces that connects the two wings of the hospital and offers a prime vista onto the hospital’s gardens and the ravine. For patients who can’t **continued on page 34**



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## HEALTH AND HAPPINESS



continued from page 32 use those areas, the sloping south facade forms an accessible hillside with irregularly shaped terraces. By distributing public spaces throughout the building, the architects hoped to encourage patients to treat the entire hospital as their home.

Even the hallways serve that goal: they're places to hang out, comfortably wide, with natural light and a scattering of sculpture. "They're like streets," Montgomery says. "They're the best places to be, and they should really provide for all kinds of activity." Bloorview's patients seem to get the idea: touring a corridor on the main floor, the architect had to dodge a girl riding past on training wheels. "I love to see that happening," Montgomery says. For children and architects, sometimes it's fun to break the rules. —Alex Bozikovic



Clockwise from left: the L-shaped building sits just south of Burke Brook ravine in suburban Toronto; a terrace on "the bridge," which connects the two hospital wings; the bright and colorful cafeteria.