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COVER STORY

HEALING ON A HILL

UPMC's new Kamin Tower, nearing completion, is designed with both natural and high-tech elements in mind.

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UPMC'S KAMIN TOWER NEARS COMPLETION

The tower, opening in 2027, blends cutting-edge technology with a healing environment

BY PAUL J. GOUGH | pgough@bizjournals.com

W

hen Sandy Rader looks at the striking 17-story tower rising up over the past three and a half years at UPMC Presbyterian Hospital in Oakland, she envisions not just the state-of-the-art care that will be done there, but also the many patient and family comforts built in by the hospital system and its architects. She also sees how it will improve the working lives of the staff, physicians, nurses, techs and others who make a modern hospital run 24/7.



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Construction on the Kamin Tower at UPMC Presbyterian is expected to be completed next year.

Rader, president of UPMC Presbyterian Shadyside since 2022, had previously been its COO, chief nursing officer and, before that, a longtime registered nurse. She knows well how challenging – physically, emotionally and intellectually – the work can be. The design team from HGA, with input from Rader and others at UPMC, kept that top of mind through the whole process.

“We thought about how can we make the work better for our staff,” Rader said. “That’s why you have rails and lifts in every patient room. That’s why there are respite rooms for our staff. That’s why there’s a sleep room (for long-working physicians) in the critical care unit.”

That will be welcome at UPMC Presbyterian, the flagship academic medical center of UPMC and University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, and, by far, the Pittsburgh region’s busiest hospital. Work on the tower began in June 2022, with construction set to be completed by the end of 2026 and occupancy sometime in 2027.

“UPMC has been talking about this for a very long time,” Rader said. “The shovel in the ground was the culmination of years of discussion and looking at what we were going to do.”

And it’ll have a new name not contemplated when the \$1.3 billion tower began to spring up out of the hill in Oakland adjacent to the existing UPMC Presbyterian Hospital: The Daniel G. and Carole L. Kamin Tower, in honor of the \$65 million gift given in 2025 by the family behind the commercial real estate giant Kamin Realty.

The Kamin family is well-known for their philanthropy, both at UPMC and also around the Pittsburgh region, including their recent donations to the Kamin Science Center, Heinz History Center and Carnegie Museum of Natural History. The Kamins’ gift at UPMC will not just be used for the building, but also for the academic medical and research advances that will take place inside.

Carole Kamin said she’s looking forward to the building when it opens and expects it will set a new standard not just for Pennsylvania, but for the whole region.

“You are going to be amazed when you see this building in action,” she said when the donation was announced.

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“We know this represents a leap forward toward a better tomorrow, to the benefit of patients who receive health care in the greater Pittsburgh area and beyond. This facility will help the UPMC team achieve breakthroughs in medicine that will continue to attract and retain top talent.”

UPMC President and CEO Leslie Davis agreed.

“The ripple effect of the Kamin generosity will be felt far and wide as we work toward developing even more groundbreaking therapies, improving clinical outcomes and providing compassionate care as we prepare to open the most technologically advanced and patient-centered facility in the region,” Davis said.

A long time coming

It was eight years ago Nov. 3 when UPMC, in front of staff and a crowd of Pittsburgh luminaries, made a big splash. At that time, UPMC announced it was investing \$2 billion in the construction of three specialty hospitals: A UPMC Heart and Transplant Hospital in Oakland, the UPMC Hillman Cancer Hospital in Shadyside and the UPMC Vision and Rehabilitation Center at UPMC Mercy in Uptown.

The initial vision was to build the three hospitals in quick succession. But the Covid-19 pandemic and a corresponding drain on health care finances led to delays in the projects and changes.

The UPMC Vision and Rehabilitation Center, while delayed, went first, opening in 2022. Called the UPMC Mercy Pavilion, it houses the UPMC Vision Institute and UPMC Rehabilitation Institute and gave UPMC's world-class vision and rehabilitation programs a new home connected to UPMC Mercy.

By 2018, UPMC had decided on building a new tower at UPMC Presbyterian instead of the heart and transplant hospital. The Shadyside project, meanwhile, was delayed from 2019 until 2021, when the health system decided to go ahead with it. There hasn't been an update on when the UPMC Hillman Cancer Hospital might be built, although UPMC has said it decided long ago to complete one project before starting construction on another.

Rader said upgrading Presbyterian came to the forefront as UPMC realized over the last several years that



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the hospital needed to be updated from the early 20th century – it broke ground in 1930 – to the 21st century. While the hospital has the modern technology required and a large medical and support staff, the building itself has long shown its age, and it doesn't resemble a modern hospital. Most of its rooms, for instance, are semi-private. And the building isn't set up for the high-tech and automation that is either here or is coming to the health care industry.

“It needed a lot of work,” she said.

UPMC considered renovating the hospital but, ironically, it would have taken longer and cost almost as much as building the new tower, which will house 636 private rooms as well as the high tech promised when UPMC announced the new hospital plan in November 2017. The existing hospital will still be used, and it will be connected to the Kamin Tower.

UPMC has a shorthand for what they're trying to do: Healing on a hill.

'It was designed for the future in mind'

The glass-encased tower has long

been completed on the outside, and the last tower crane has long since left. The 650 or so workers who are at the site are now deep inside, building out the interior framing, drywall, headwall installation and the private rooms. The 636 rooms will include 164 intensive care and 472 medical/surgical, along with 11 new operating rooms. UPMC has been pioneering offsite construction of some parts of the build, especially the assembly-line production of almost every bathroom, at a site off West Carson Street before they are carted to the Kamin Tower for installation.

Even with interior construction still to be completed, a recent visit to the Kamin Tower shows the high-tech touches that mark the design.

One of the major ones is called the holodeck, which was designed by HGA to provide spaces where physicians, residents, interns and other staff can huddle and strategize in a comfortable and focused setting instead of out in the hallway or in a patient room. HGA calls it “a nimble integrated technology space that supports diagnosis, treatment planning,

team collaboration, teaching and information retrieval and delivery.”

Each of the holodecks will have computer screens and large whiteboards to display instantaneous medical monitoring of each patient room on the floor.

What's not included in the design, or on any of the floors, are traditional nursing stations. The holodeck, and the technology built in to each part of the hospital floors, will make it much easier for nurses and physicians to monitor patients.

“It's not a centralized nursing station as you know it today,” said Courtney Hoffbauer, UPMC VP of clinical practice operations and standardization, adding that the high-tech screens and the monitoring aren't just state-of-the-art now.

“It was designed for the future in mind,” Hoffbauer said.

More for the patient

A modern, state-of-the-art hospital is one thing, and they've got that covered. But UPMC, with HGA's design, also has

A patient room under construction in the Kamin Tower at UPMC Presbyterian.

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spent a lot of time trying to make the Kamin Tower not just the best for medical care and the latest treatments, but also a place for healing.

That approach starts with the patient rooms, which are connected technologically in every way, with 75-inch screens, a high-definition video camera and in-room electronic health records and monitoring. The rooms have lots of natural lighting and window views, as does the entire tower. And each of the rooms are designed for easier cleaning, lifting of patients and also quick conversion to negative pressure if needed.

The first four floors of Kamin Tower are open to the community, with a full-service restaurant, grab-and-go food outlet, Starbucks, an interfaith chapel, and meeting and collaboration spaces.

The terrazzo floor, which was just installed, is miles above standard-issue hospital. UPMC is calling it a Lifestyle Village, where patients' families, employees and the community can go to rest and recharge.



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Top: A meeting space under construction. Above: Sections of a glass montage installation by local artists Martha Jackson Jarvis and Njena Surae Jarvis are being placed at the entrance of the new facility.

Another just-installed feature is artwork, a major part of the entire building. UPMC worked with several artists on just the right level of art and sculptures.

"All of the art relates to either Pittsburgh or Pennsylvania," said John Krolicki, VP of facilities and support services.

The hospital also will have outdoor terraces and great views of the surrounding area. Rader said it's important for the natural and high-tech to come together in the Kamin Tower.

"(We want) to provide them with a better service and a better environment to receive health care," Rader said.

UPMC officials have already made plans about how they're going to transition operations into the new building. After the construction workers leave, UPMC Presbyterian staff will be working on training and getting used to the new systems and locations for the next few months. Rader said it will happen quickly, after the switch is flipped, according to the activation plan.

"When we move patients in, it's going to be all on one day," Rader said.

SANDY RADER, UPMC PRESBYTERIAN SHADYSIDE

FROM HOSPITAL BEDSIDE TO THE EXECUTIVE SUITE

BY PAUL J. GOUGH | pgough@bizjournals.com

Q&A Sandy Rader has been associated with UPMC Shadyside Hospital since 2005, first as director of inpatient nursing services and then soon after as chief nursing officer. She was later promoted to COO and then president of UPMC Presbyterian Shadyside in January 2022. Rader's not only running Pittsburgh's largest and busiest hospital, but she's also overseeing a major construction project at UPMC Presbyterian, the Daniel G. and Carole L. Kamin Tower that will transform the more than 100-year-old hospital into a state-of-the-art beacon of health care for the Pittsburgh region and beyond.

How did you become a nurse? I heard your mother had something to do with it. I have a twin sister, and that was pretty much what she declared we would be. And we always listened to her! We're both nurses. My sister works in dialysis. So every morning and every night, the car rides and commutes are spent on the phone talking about our days. We have another sister, and she's not a nurse. She runs the family business that my parents started. And so oftentimes it's a trio. When people see us together, they think we're triplets.

ABOUT SANDY RADER
Title: President, UPMC Presbyterian Shadyside
Education: Diploma in Nursing, Jameson Memorial Hospital School of Nursing; B.S., nursing, Purdue University; M.S., administration, University of Notre Dame; doctorate, nursing practice, Chatham University
First job: Worked at family's concrete business
Hobbies: Reading, spending time with family and friends
Causes: On boards of Family House and Chatham University

You grew up in New Castle but then left. What brought you back to western Pennsylvania? I met my husband, and he lived in Indiana, where he owned a business. I always wanted to come back to this area, so we sold that business after we had children. I wanted my kids to grow up around their cousins, their grandparents. So it was important for me to come back to this area. And when I did, I had worked in health care for about 14 years at that point. It was in the late '90s with all the mergers and acquisitions, and I knew exactly what I wanted in a health care organization, and UPMC just really fit that bill. I joined UPMC Horizon first because that's closer to New Castle. And then five years later, I was asked to come down to UPMC Shadyside.

Did you always want to be president of a hospital? If anyone would have said to me 20 years ago, 'do you think you'll be president of an academic medical system,' I never set my sights on that. I always just focused on doing a good job at the job I was in. I truly believe if you do a good job where you are, doors open for you. It's really an honor (to be president of UPMC Presbyterian Shadyside). I think what we do, what the health care providers do in serving this community, serving this region is certainly a privilege to



lead the teams that do that. I believe that my job is to create a culture where folks can do their best work, and so that's why I come to work every day.

You're one of a growing group of

hospital leaders who came up as nurses. How important do you think that is? People ask if you have to be a nurse to be a hospital administrator. Not necessarily. I've been a nurse for 40 years and so much has changed in health care



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over those 40 years that what I learned in school is very different from what you see today. You have to have a curiosity about you, not be afraid to ask questions, not be afraid to constantly learn. I love spending time with our clinical chairmen

and chairwomen here in all of our specialties because I am constantly learning things from them. People will say to me, how did you do this (get to become hospital president)? It just evolved. I felt like I did a good job at this level, so I wanted to make

a bigger difference. It doesn't matter where you come from, it's what you do to move forward and to gain additional experience that makes a difference.

What kinds of things do you do

A DAY IN THE LIFE

We asked Rader to break down her typical day:



5:30 a.m.: I wake up to get into the hospital. Weekends are a little later, and I start Saturday and Sunday mornings with an Orangetheory Fitness class.



7 a.m.: I arrive and start the workday between 7 and 8.



Lunch: I usually eat at my desk, and it's usually a salad.



End of day: The timing of the end of the workday is different every day depending on evening work commitments.



Bedtime: I'm early to bed!

when you're not running a hospital and overseeing construction of a high-rise bed tower? Most of my time is spent with family. I have a big extended family. I have these two incredible sisters that I spend a lot of time with, and certainly my husband and our children. And we are new grandparents! Two years ago our first grandchild (was born), then four weeks ago our second, and the next one comes tomorrow (as of the time of this interview). I always thought people were crazy the way they talked about their grandkids, but now I get it.

Are you able to see them a lot? Yes. Everybody's local.

Do you watch TV? I hardly ever watch TV.

Does that mean you don't watch medical shows? I did watch "The Pitt." I figured it's one evening and it's relaxing, and we have a couple of doctors (at UPMC Shadyside) who review the content and advise them. I enjoyed watching that.

Do you think it helps people understand what you and your colleagues do? I think it has brought a little more attention to it. Working in health care is tough, physically. When you think of the work a nurse does, it's physical, it's emotional, it's intellectually challenging. And as we build the (Kamin) Tower, we thought about that. How can we make the work better for our staff?

How important is mentorship for you as a leader? We do a lot of that at UPMC. We take about three fellows every year (at UPMC Presbyterian Shadyside), people who have graduated from health care administrative programs. It's a two-year program. They rotate with us as executives in the first year. And the second year, they have a position that we place them in. It launches their career. It's not unusual for me to have one of those people with me all the time. I don't think you're a leader in the field unless you are looking at who's coming up and how do you support them. There's a great leadership team here at Presby and Shadyside. I always say that our staff takes care of patients, and our job is to take care of the staff.