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# John S. Dunn Behavioral Sciences Center at UTHealth Science Center in Houston features Rockfon ceiling systems

# *– Focused on reducing patients’ stress, the new psychiatric hospital prioritizes the healing benefits for acoustic comfort, daylight and access to nature –*

Chicago (Dec. 2022) – The John S. Dunn Behavioral Sciences Center at UTHealth Science Center’s Houston Continuum Care Campus celebrated its grand opening in March 2022. Built in partnership with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), the new 253,000-square-foot, 264-bed facility is the first public psychiatric hospital Texas has opened in 25 years.

Perkins&Will’s Houston studio designed the new Behavioral Sciences Center with associate architect, Smith & Company Architects. “Inspired by the calming effects and healing benefits of natural light and nature, the design features scenic views and access to landscaped courtyards,” explained Perkins&Will. “Designers also utilized abuse-resistant and noise-reducing materials in conjunction with angular geometry to diminish noise and thereby reduce stress on patients and staff.”

Enhancing comfort and calm within this healing environment, multiple Rockfon acoustic ceiling products were specified as the basis of design. These included two types of suspension systems, four types of acoustic stone wool panels and linear metal panels. In total, AECO Interior Contractors installed more than 119,000 square feet of Rockfon ceiling systems throughout the facility.

Nearly 80,000 square feet of Rockfon® Alaska® and Tropic™ stone wool ceiling panels were installed in the provider offices. These products deliver very high sound absorption, helping create a calm, comfortable and confidential setting in the provider offices and treatment areas. In the training and meeting rooms, sound-absorbing ceilings enhance learning through speech intelligibility for clear communication and concentration.

A Noise Reduction Coefficient is the measurement used to demonstrate ceiling systems’ acoustic performance. Perkins&Will specified Rockfon Alaska and Pacific with a best-level 0.90 NRC. The Center for Health Design categorizes the use of high-performing, sound-absorptive, acoustic ceilings with an 0.90 NRC or higher as a priority design recommendation base on the strength of evidence available and the impact on safety, quality and cost.

Acoustic standards for health care facilities are detailed in the U.S. Green Building Council’s LEED® v4 rating system, the National Institute of Health (NIH) Design Requirements Manual, and The Facility Guidelines Institute (FGI), the health care industry’s authoritative source for guidance on facility planning, design and construction. Rockfon ceiling panels comply with all acoustic ceiling requirements in building standards.

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In the clean room labs and kitchen, Rockfon® Hygienic Plus™ ceiling panels also provide a 0.90 NRC while addressing the rooms’ specialized functionality and rigorous cleaning standards. Less sound absorption and privacy were required in the hallways, so Rockfon® Pacific™ panels provided an economical ceiling panel.

Metal ceiling panels also offer a durable, easy to clean product with optional acoustic improvement and biophilic finishes. For the Behavioral Sciences Center, Rockfon® Planar® Macro 4-inch metal linear panels feature a WoodScenes® Light Pecan finish on the building’s exterior overhang. Windload testing was completed to ensure performance in the outside application. The exterior ceiling system offers the low-maintenance benefits of metal with the look of wood as seen through the center’s transparent wall system.

Contributing to healthy interiors, both Rockfon’s metal and stone wool ceiling panels do not support the growth of mold, mildew or other potentially harmful microorganisms. Stone wool inherently resists fire, water and humidity without the use of added chemicals. Rockfon’s stone wool ceiling panels also meet and achieve UL Environment’s GREENGUARD® Gold certification for low-emitting materials, contributing to healthy indoor air quality.

Supporting design professionals in making informed choices, Rockfon’s comprehensive material and product transparency documentation includes Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs), Health Product Declarations (HPDs), and the International Living Future Institute’s Declare Label 2.0 – Living Building ChallengeSM Red List Approved.

“The UTHealth Behavioral Sciences Center is a transformative project that will not only provide the highest level of behavioral and mental healthcare, but also work to combat stigmas on what a psychiatric hospital looks like,” said Diana Davis, principal and managing director of the Houston studio of Perkins&Will. “Knowing that behavioral and mental health is a critical aspect of one’s holistic well-being, our team was thoughtful in approaching each design decision through research and with the interest of promoting healing.”

The building’s floorplan promotes appropriate and helpful interactions between patients and staff. Inside each unit, a daylit central living space is surrounded by patient bedrooms. A warm material palette sets the tone of a soothing and welcoming space. Windows in the therapy mall, activity room and communal dining area offer views onto internal courtyards and the surrounding tree-lined landscape. Walking paths, seating areas and gardens allow for tranquil recreational opportunities for patients and a change of scenery for group therapy.

Views of nature and natural light are recognized for their healing benefits. Maximizing daylight within the Behavioral Sciences Center’s interior, the white surface of Rockfon’s acoustic stone wool panels provide high light reflectance. The higher the ceiling’s light reflectance, the more effective light sources are in illuminating the room. Up to 86 percent of light in the center is reflected and diffused by Rockfon’s ceiling panels. Diffused light reduces glare on screens and monitors, which in turn, reduces eye strain and stress-associated health issues, and contributes to clarity, accuracy and well-being.

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Keeping everyone’s health and well-being in mind, the center’s Support Pavilion provides an adjoined, but securely separated area for the professional staff. With a flexible layout for future adaptation, it currently includes break rooms, on-call sleep rooms, a mother’s room and training areas.

JT Vaughn Construction broke ground on the project in June 2019. Severe weather events and pandemic protocols required adjustments, yet the project stayed on schedule. In early 2021, AECO began installing the ceiling systems. Their familiarity with Rockfon’s systems contributed to a fast and accurate installation, and an on-time completion.

At the ribbon-cutting event in March 2022, Texas HHSC’s executive commissioner, Cecile Erwin Young, told KPRC-TV, “This new, state-of-the-art facility is a much-needed investment in the community and it will have a long-lasting impact on our ability to provide care for the most vulnerable Texans living with serious mental illness.”

According to UTHealth, “The Behavioral Sciences Center will benefit Houston and the State of Texas through fewer readmissions, faster admissions for children and adolescents, reduced burden on law enforcement personnel and facilities, shorter time in hospital emergency rooms, and more cost-effective community-based levels of care.”

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***John S. Dunn Behavioral Sciences Center, UTHealth Science Center, Continuum Care Campus, 2800 MacGregor Way, Houston, TX 77021, https://www.uth.edu***

* Owner: Texas Health and Human Services Commission; Houston; https://www.hhs.texas.gov
* Architect: Perkins&Will; Houston; https://perkinswill.com/studio/houston
* Associate architect: Smith & Company Architects; Stafford, Texas; https://www.sc-arch.com
* Construction manager: JT Vaughn Construction; Houston; https://www.vaughnconstruction.com/contact/houston
* Ceiling systems – installing contractor: AECO Interior Contractors; Houston; https://acousti.com/locations/houston/
* Ceiling systems – manufacturer: Rockfon; Chicago; https://www.rockfon.com
* Photographers:
  + Interiors – Joe Aker, Aker Imaging
  + Exterior – James Steinkamp Photography, courtesy of Perkins&Will
* Video – project rendering: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XY5gClEeXH8

***About Rockfon***

*Rockfon is part of the ROCKWOOL Group and is offering advanced acoustic ceilings and wall solutions to create beautiful, comfortable spaces.*

*At the ROCKWOOL Group, we are committed to enriching the lives of everyone who experiences our product solutions. Our expertise is perfectly suited to tackle many of today’s biggest sustainability and development challenges, from energy consumption and noise pollution to fire resilience, water scarcity and flooding. Our range of products reflects the diversity of the world’s needs, while supporting our stakeholders in reducing their own carbon footprint.*

*Stone wool is a versatile material and forms the basis of all our businesses. With approximately 11,500 passionate colleagues in 39 countries, we are the world leader in stone wool solutions, from building insulation to acoustic ceilings, external cladding systems to horticultural solutions, engineered fibers for industrial use to insulation for the process industry, and marine and offshore.*

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