

WARD SECRETARY'S WORK STATION

# 389 - 67

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COMMUNITY SYSTEMS FOUNDATION

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December 27, 1967

389  
Mr. D. F. Johannides  
Assistant Administrator  
W. A. Foote Memorial Hospital  
205 N. East Avenue  
Jackson, Michigan

Dear Mr. Johannides:

Please find attached a report on the "Study of the Ward Secretaries Work Stations" on the fourth floor units.

The work flow was found to be generally efficient and the main recommendations are: to change the layout of the 4 North station to provide separate working areas; the addition of a telephone extension in Pediatrics; and the possible consideration of expanding the nurses station in 4 Main in the future.

This study was conducted by Mr. M. O. Jacobs, Project Assistant and Mr. P. Gonzalez, Project Director. Excellent cooperation was given by Mr. Coy, Mr. Bowen, all the ward secretaries and all nursing personnel.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Pablo Gonzalez', is written over the typed name and title.

Pablo Gonzalez  
Project Director

PG:cf

attachment

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## INTRODUCTION

At the request of Administration the Systems Engineering Department undertook a survey of the Ward Secretaries work stations on the units located on the fourth floor: 4 North, I.C.U., 4 Main and Pediatrics.

The purpose of the study was to determine the paper work flow and the possibility of improving it.

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A change in the location of the secretary's work area in 4 North was not successful due to a tendency to resist change.
2. A change in the layout of the 4 North station is recommended in order to provide separate work areas for the physicians, the nurses and the secretary. A cost of approximately \$700.00 will be incurred.
3. The work area in I.C.U. is efficient and no changes are recommended.
4. A new telephone extension is recommended for the Pediatrics nursing station in order to decrease walking and interruptions of the personnel.
5. The secretaries' work area in 4 Main is efficient, but the size of the station is small and tends to create congestion. A suggestion of increasing the size of the station, by expanding into one of the adjacent patient rooms, could be considered in future plans if it is felt that the advantages gained might offset the monetary costs.

## FOUR NORTH

The nursing station in this unit is the largest of the four stations surveyed (Approximately 350 sq. ft. of working space).

The W.S. work area is located on the southwest corner of the station and approximately 25 feet away from the main desk, chart well, and reception area.

A guideline for the functions of the W.S. lists as numbers 2 and 3 of the Secretaries' responsibilities to: "answer intercom" and to act as "receptionist, general information"; also since the W.S. job is greatly dependent on the information obtained from the charts, it would be convenient to locate her work area on the main desk near the intercom and the chart well. It was decided to test the location change for a period of one or two weeks.

### Location Change Test

The move was not well received by the nurses or the secretaries. Their main objections were:

1. Not enough shelves or storage space available.
2. Congestion due to all personnel -- as well as doctors -- using the front desk.
3. The above mentioned congestion might lead to a grave error in transcribing orders.
4. Too many interruptions because of the congestion.
5. Too much distraction due to the constant ringing from the intercom.

6. There is the possibility of putting a chart in the rack before the orders are transcribed.
7. Too much walking back and forth to other counters where nurses are checking orders.

Approximately 30 to 40 engineering hours were spent observing the effects of the location change in order to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages.

Nursing personnel felt that answering the intercom is impractical since the majority of the times the nurse has to go to the bedside anyway; if the W.S. answers the intercom, she in turn has to find a nurse or perform the task herself if nursing personnel is not available.

This objection is totally invalid. If the system is used properly some of the trips may be completely eliminated. In the cases when a patient requests sleeping pills or some such item from the medicine room, one trip may be eliminated by taking the item directly to the patient. In other cases a patient may require only information. If a nurse is not around the W.S. herself would, in any case, have to see what was wrong with the patient since it may be an emergency; however, the absence of nursing personnel from the work station is a very rare occurrence if good supervision exists.

It was found that the front desk was mildly congested only during rush periods and the congestion had no effect on the work output. Actually only one person (the W.S.) was added to the congestion since rush periods do occur once or twice each day anyway. It was felt by the surveying personnel that no grave errors would occur due to the short periods of congestion.

Storage space was a problem, but this could be remedied by adding drawers or shelves under the counter.

It was felt that less walking was necessary by having the chart well next to the W.S. Subsequent surveys (after the work area was transferred to its original location) showed the W.S. walking to, and working at, the front desk.

Generally it was felt by the engineering team that the location change would improve the work flow if the move had been accepted. Most of the objections were based on the human tendency to resist change; however, since opposition to this move was considerable, any advantage gained would have been nullified by the decrease in morale and working attitude developed by the personnel involved.

#### Alternate Layout

In order to provide a separate work area for the W.S. and a more private area for the doctors, a layout was prepared showing a physicians' office and a W.S. work area. See Appendix A.

This layout will place the chart rack -- most of the paper work is, at one time or another, connected with the rack -- in a central location available to all concerned, yet the work areas are separate from each other in order to minimize congestion.

By providing an enclosed area for the physicians, they will be encouraged to use it more often than currently since more privacy is provided for their telephone conversations and use of the dictaphone.

The proposed ward secretary's work area is spacious, convenient and centrally located. The area is only 10-12 feet from the front desk where she can communicate with visitors and nurses without leaving her work area.

The proposed chart rack is revolving rack such as presently in use on '3 North.

Enough room is provided on the side desk for one and maybe two nurses to work on. It is not desirable to provide too much counter space in order to avoid congestion by making the nurses (except the head nurse) work on the front desk.

It is estimated that the cost of such a layout will be approximately \$700.00 for labor and equipment (including revolving chart rack). See Appendix B for cost estimate.

#### I.C.U.

No layout changes are necessary in this station as the work flow seems to be quite adequate and efficient.

#### PEDIATRICS

The size of this station is relatively small and some congestion tends to occur. However, this does not seem to deter the work of the secretaries and their work area is efficient. An extra telephone extension should be provided since there is only one instrument in the station. It is often necessary for the secretary and the nursing personnel to go to the medicine room to use the second extension whenever the telephone in the station is in use.

Considerable walking, interruptions and inconvenience could be avoided by installing a second extension in the Ward Secretaries' work area.

#### FOUR MAIN

This station is small and congested by all the personnel working in the unit. The W.S. work area and the work flow are efficient in spite of the crowded conditions.

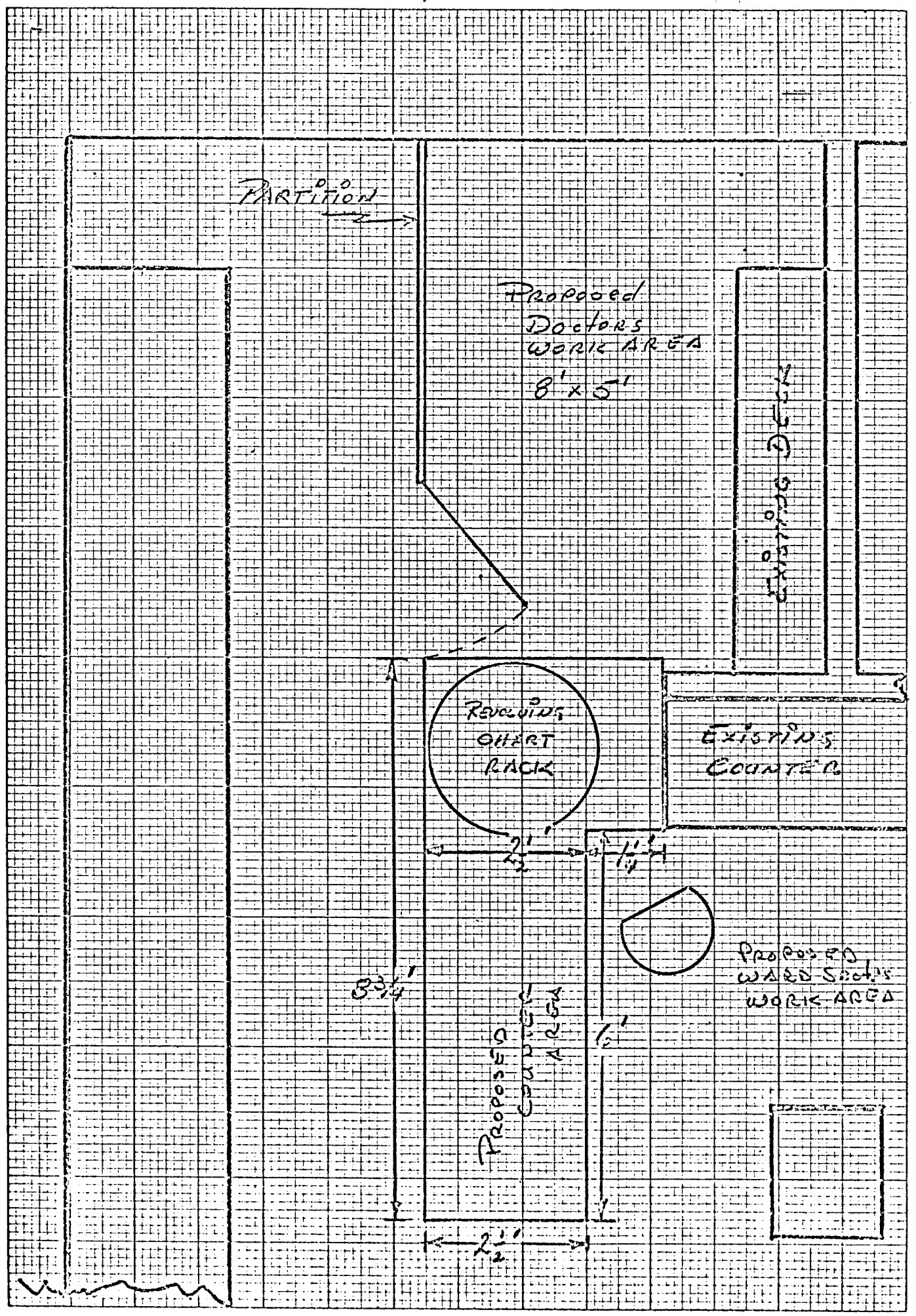
It has been suggested by some of the nursing personnel to increase the size of the station by taking over one of the adjacent patient rooms. This would definitely decrease congestion and make for a more comfortable work area for all concerned. However, it would be a costly installation in terms of lost revenue and construction costs.

The advantages of such an expansion would be rather intangible since it would mean more comfort for the personnel, less interruptions and a probably increase in morale. These effects have not been measured or compared against the monetary costs; therefore, a definite recommendation on this suggestion cannot be made at this time.

APPENDIX

EUGENE DIETZGEN CO.  
MADE IN U. S. A.

NO. 340-16 DIETZGEN GRAPH PAPER  
16 X 16 PER INCH



P. G. 1957

4 North Nursing Station, Scale: 1/2" = 1'

APPENDIX B

ESTIMATED COSTS - 4 NORTH NURSING STATION

Alternative # 1

Material Costs—Partition, trim, door plus trim and closer, and Formica counter, glasswork.	<u>\$182.40</u>
30 Chart revolving - chart rack 1957 Cost \$242 Present estimated Cost	<u>\$302.00</u>
Labor costs to install above items (Carpenters and Painters)	<u>\$210.52</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<u><b>\$694.92</b></u>

Alternative # 2

Estimated Costs approximately same as alternative # 1.

H. Brownlow  
Chief Engineer

12-12-67