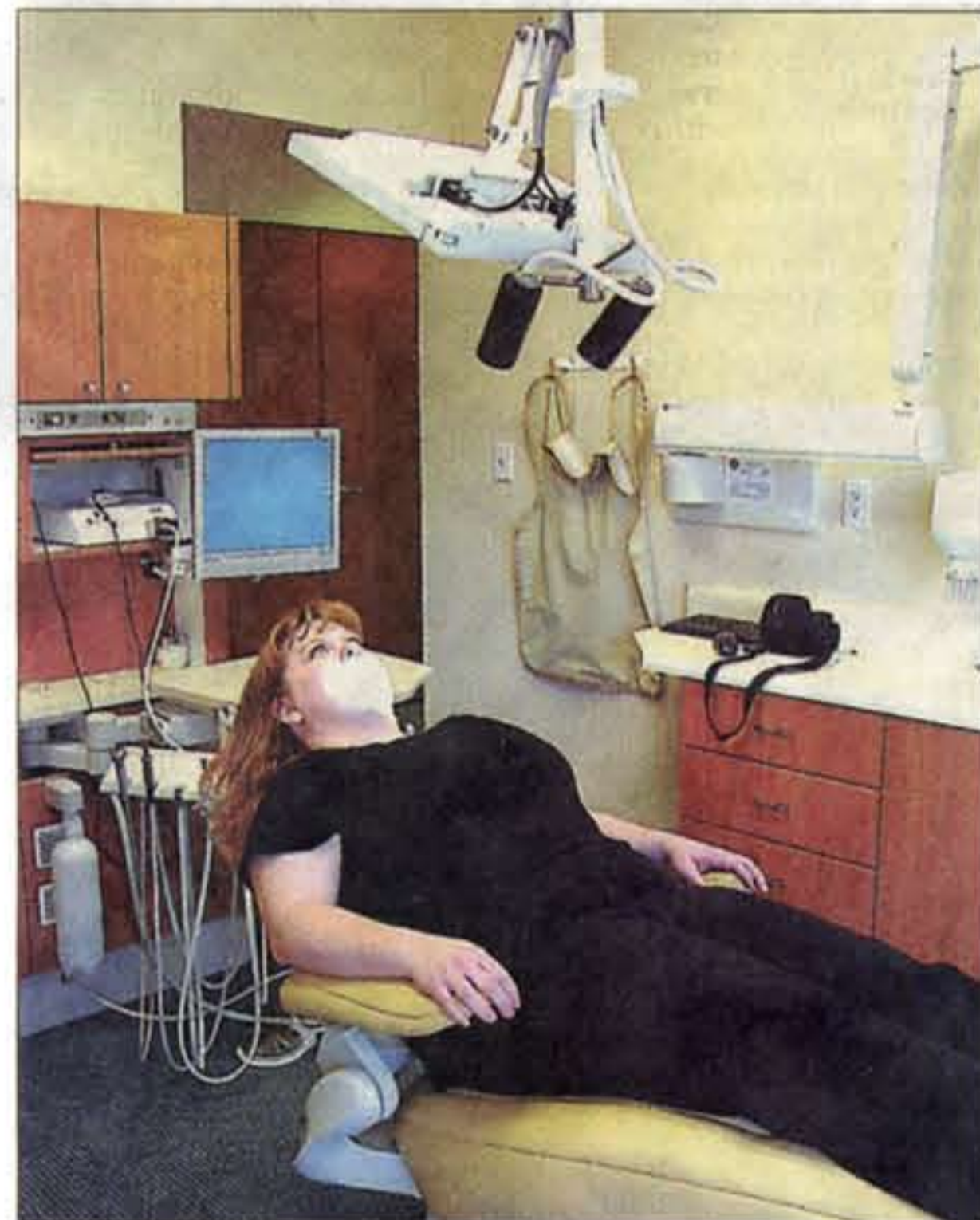


OFFICE DESIGN

## Filling a-void

Summerlin dentist incorporates computer system, creature comforts to take bite out of patient anxiety



NICK HALEY/REAL ESTATE

Registered dental assistant Nicole Rainey demonstrates an overhead dentist's lamp that lights up just the patient's mouth, one of several comforts built into the design of Harmony Dental.

By NICK HALEY

REAL ESTATE WRITER

With clutter-free rooms displaying trendy colors, tasteful décor and decorative trim, there are few hints inside the lobby of Elizabeth Reiter's new office indicating its purpose. Even the large flat-screen monitor on one wall preaching the virtues of good oral hygiene can be redirected to show TV programming, or a favorite movie, or whatever the staff at Harmony Dental directs it to display.

Reiter's new venture backs her belief that technology developed over the past few years, combined with a comfortably designed office, can transform the possibilities for dentists eager to abandon the cramped conditions and intimidating appearance of the typical office that contribute to patient anxiety in favor of a more pleasant experience.

"I don't think (the public) knows how far we have come (in dentistry)," Reiter said. "For cosmetics, for comfort, for painkilling, the past few years have seen a lot of



NICK HALEY/REAL ESTATE

Dentist Elizabeth Reiter sits in a treatment room at her new office, Harmony Dental, located in Summerlin. The room features floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the landscaped grounds outside, as well as a flat-screen monitor that can display short features on dental procedures, images from the patient's mouth, or movies.

changes."

Following a four-year retirement, the Summerlin resident said she was enticed back into the profession by the opportunity to own her own office within walking distance of her

home. She purchased a pad for an office building within the Hills Center North Business Center on Village Center Circle, hired an architect, and began designing her ideal dentist's office from scratch.

A cook's tour shows how fully Reiter has embraced technology and design to make a setting that is comfort-

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Harmony Dental and its attached tenant's office conforms to design standards of the Summerlin master-planned community with rock trim and desert colors. The office is situated near the Summerlin Library and Performing Arts Center.

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able for staff and calming for patients.

Behind a high counter top of granite topped with decorator flourishes such as a slender vase with a peacock feather, office manager Joan Moore sits at a computer workstation that is conspicuously devoid of paper.

"That's on purpose," Reiter said. "I try to hide everything I can hide. In the case of the patients' files, that serves a few purposes."

A paperless record system allows the office to maintain all of its files electronically, including personal dental charts, X-rays and notes on visits. The system primarily helps keep the office in compliance with new patient privacy regulations requiring greater control over records, but also presents a cleaner look that is less daunting for staff and visitors alike.

"My goal was to make the office as calming and pretty and inviting as possible," she said.

Reiter said it is the treatment areas where design and technology most pay off for the patient. The rooms are, like the rest of the office, wide, bright, airy and clutter-free. Dental instruments and supplies are kept out of view. Patients face a floor-to-ceiling plate of glass overlooking the colorful landscaping that separates the office from the shopping plaza across the way. A heat-free overhead lamp shines just on the patient's mouth, not in the eyes.

Everyone's favorite feature, however, is the overhead monitor.

Just below the lamp is a flat screen capable of displaying television, movies, brief narratives on dental procedures or images from the patient's electronic dental records, including X-rays and up-to-the-moment images from the patient's mouth. A product of the Technology and Lighting Center of the Seltzer Institute, a manufacturer for the dental industry, the monitor and accompanying headphones can serve as a diversion for the patient or help in explaining a procedure. The system came with a library of presentations from CAESY Education Systems that illustrates the how's and why's of various procedures.

"Patient education has been great," Reiter said. "That's the main reason I bought it."

For patients who require more specific information on their condition, the monitor can show a mouth-cam image to help the patient understand, or before-and-after shots to demonstrate what took place in the procedure. Over the image the dentist can draw circles or highlight features to explain a point.

"I had one patient who told me he never would have believed what I told him if he hadn't seen it on the screen. He was a dentalphobe and needed to see it for himself," Reiter said.

The office is almost too comfortable. A cooler in a corner

of the lobby contains carbonated beverages. Combine a refreshment with reclining treatment chairs and a favorite DVD and the office can be a relaxing place to unwind and take in the scenery of passing traffic.

Reiter and her kids, in fact, do just that after school. With the office only a five-minute walk from their home, their school up the street, a shopping center just across Village Center, and Reiter's husband working from home, the family completely avoids the Las Vegas commute. A veteran of lengthy commutes in California, Reiter said the family fully buys into Summerlin's mantra of "live, work and play."

"We never have to leave. We love Summerlin," Reiter said. "My daughter takes ballet just a short walk away, the tennis courts we use are close, The Meadows School (where her children attend) is very close."

"There's also such a mix, people at all levels of income and ages. ... Not all of my clients are custom-home people. Many are just average joe blows who need a dentist."

Hills Center North Business Center is adjacent to the Summerlin Library and Performing Arts Center. The complex, which is under development by Mark L. Fine and Associates, comprises a series of pads for free-standing buildings, offering professionals and owners of small businesses an opportunity to own their own building in an

office park setting. A relatively high concentration of such owner-occupied office parks are under development in and near the northern portions of Summerlin.

Reiter's architect, Jeff Dacks, has specialized in the design of owner-occupied offices for 12 years. Meeting Reiter's needs was a matter of good space management, and integration of her design and technology goals — having lots of complex machinery hidden from sight, something he compared to building "a little Swiss watch."

Dacks' exterior design had to fit Reiter's goals and Summerlin's design standards. The heavily landscaped exterior, featuring colorful, drought-tolerant plants, provides a pleasant backdrop through the plate glass for patients sitting in treatment rooms. Windows are recessed 3 feet from the exterior walls, casting long shadows and keeping conditions comfortable inside.

"I've lived in the desert a long time and I know you just have to respect it," Dacks said.

It was also important that she have a tenant — even with another dentist in her own practice, she required only about 2,800 square feet of her building, which is 4,833 square feet. The design of the structure is meant to appear as two buildings joined together, ensuring the tenant room for proper signage.

Such owner-occupant offices have become popular in recent