

INSIDE: ENERGY-EFFICIENT PROJECTS | NEW PRODUCTS GUIDE

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A PRESCRIPTION FOR PROGRESS

Decorative Film Becomes
a Hospital's Remedy

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Decorative Film Becomes a Hospital's Remedy

By Vinnie Driscoll

When the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC) set out to update the glass handrails in one of its high-traffic stairwells, the goal was more than aesthetics—it was about enhancing safety, ensuring durability, and creating a visual experience that supports the emotional well-being of its patients and visitors. Through a successful collaboration between Source One Digital and installer Midwest Glass Tinters (MGT Films), custom decorative window film emerged as the ideal solution.

At the heart of the project was the use of CreativeFX, a custom-printed film developed by Source One Digital that transforms standard glass into a storytelling canvas. For UMMC, that story took the form of a white hexagon-based frit pattern with a wave-like flow, spanning glass railings on the second and third floors.

"In a world where every material is asked to do more, glass is no exception," says Katie Jasmin, vice president of national sales at Source One Digital. "When utilizing the option of custom decorative film, you're not just defining space—you're curating an experience."

BALANCING FORM AND FUNCTION

Glass handrails are a modern design staple, prized for their ability to maintain open sightlines and maximize natural light. In healthcare settings, especially pediatric or high-traffic environments like UMMC, they also introduce safety considerations. Visibility, spatial awareness, and tamper-resistance become paramount.



Custom decorative window film turned the glass handrails at the University of Mississippi Medical Center from bland to breathtaking, creating a striking visual experience.

To address these needs, Jasmin's team engineered a design that evokes motion and fluidity. "A custom-printed white frit wave pattern using hexagon shapes (*see sidebar below*) was engineered to create a sense of forward movement as visitors ascend or descend the stairwell," she explains.

The result is more than visual interest—it's a form of environmental graphic design (EGD), which blends art and architecture to improve how people navigate and experience space. As Jasmin points out, "Whether you're specifying window film for privacy, branding, or ambiance, this project shows how custom solutions can turn glass into a feature, not just a surface."

CUSTOM FRIT PATTERN; FRIT PATTERN "ON"; FRIT PATTERN "OFF"

"Frit" is terminology used by the glass industry to describe design on the glass. "On" is with the pattern in the positive, as shown in this example, and "off" would be the pattern in the negative.



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Multi-story lifts were used to reach the glass handrails, which were 30-40 feet high.

A SMARTER SPECIFICATION

The decision to use film instead of direct-to-glass printing helped UMMC stay on budget and on schedule without sacrificing aesthetics.

“Applying a frit pattern with window film offers substantial cost advantages over direct-to-glass options,” says Jasmin. “CreativeFX films replicate the refined look of etched or ceramic frit glass at a fraction of the price [of glass].”

Durability and cleanliness are non-negotiable in a healthcare setting. Source One Digital took extra steps to ensure performance. “The spec called for printing to an optically-clear, durable vinyl film with an overlamine,” Jasmin notes. “Vinyl with overlamine is thicker than polyester, and the laminate added an extra layer of protection for scratch resistance and UV rays.”

To further preserve cleanliness and prevent tampering, the film was applied to the exterior side of the handrail glass, ensuring the design remained intact over time.

AFTER-HOURS PRECISION

Bringing the project to life was no small feat. Kasia Morrison, vice president of MGT Films, led the installation team and faced a unique set of logistical and technical challenges. Chief among them: working in an active hospital environment without disrupting day-to-day operations.

“We had to do this after hours—from 5:30 p.m. to 2 a.m.—which required a lot of set-up and breakdown, about an hour on both ends,” Morrison says. With the handrails located on the second and third floors, her team, which included subcontractors from KAM Unlimited, also had to operate multi-story lifts and work with precision at heights of 30 to 40 feet.

“There are a lot of window film people who won’t go 30 to 40 feet in the air,” Morrison adds. “This project definitely stood out because of that.”

The installation took eight days with a three-person crew, and required custom field cutting around the stand-off brackets that supported the handrails. Morrison had scouted the site months in advance, taking detailed measurements and obtaining drawings from the glass manufacturer to prepare for the job.



WHAT IT TOOK TO GET IT DONE

- Installation Hours: 5:30 p.m. to 2 a.m.
- Crew: 3 installers
- Duration: 8 days
- Height Challenges: 30-to-40-foot lifts
- Site Complexity: Field-cutting around standoff brackets

Despite the complexity, the install was nearly flawless. *Nearly.* “Even with the two lifts, there was one panel we could not reach, so we had to come back an extra day to finish it,” she says with a laugh. “With all the possible hiccups, if that’s our only one we’re doing alright ... but I had to laugh. Really, one panel!”

SEAMLESS SAFETY AND SUBTLE STORYTELLING

Hospital staff and administrators were enthusiastic about the final result. Not only did the frit wave pattern enhance safety by improving glass visibility, it also served a wayfinding purpose, subtly guiding movement through the space. And thanks to the late-night schedule and access restrictions, the install proceeded without public disruption.

“Everyone had to be badged,” Morrison says. “But since it was after hours, the area was cut off from the public so we had no real issues regarding protocols. And the staff all loved the results.”

For Jasmin, the project’s success affirms the broader value of integrating design into functional materials. “Scientific evidence reinforces what designers have long understood,” she says, citing the Society for Environmental Graphic Design (SEGD). “Thoughtfully integrating art into spaces has measurable benefits for emotional and physical well-being, such as: reducing stress and anxiety, improving mood, aiding pain management, and supporting emotional processing.”

A MODEL FOR FUTURE PROJECTS

As healthcare design evolves, the UMMC stairwell installation stands as a compelling case study in how custom window film can meet diverse demands: safety, storytelling, budget, and beauty. For other institutions considering similar upgrades, this collaboration demonstrates what’s possible when manufacturers and installers are aligned in vision and execution. **WF**

Vinnie Driscoll is the editor of WINDOW FILM magazine.

