

Strategic Edge

Series: Workforce Realities in Healthcare Capital Programs

Chapter 2 - The Retirement Challenge

In our previous article, we explored the growing shortage of skilled labor across healthcare construction. Now we turn to the next reality — **retirement** — and the impact it's having across the healthcare planning, design, and construction landscape.

The data is sobering. The average age of construction workers continues to rise, increasing from 41.6 to 42.1 between 2011 and 2023, and nearly **41% of today's workforce** is projected to retire by 2031. In healthcare design and construction, these individuals are often master tradespeople, superintendents, and project leaders carrying decades of hard-earned knowledge that's difficult to replace once they exit.

This shift is more than a demographic trend — it's an inflection point. As veteran professionals retire, institutional expertise and continuity in project delivery risk being lost. Training and mentorship can narrow the gap, but no program can replicate the wisdom that comes only from experience in the field.

The retirement landscape also mirrors broader workforce challenges. Only **26% of construction workers** participate in pension or retirement plans, compared with 34% in other industries. For related healthcare professionals, participation rises to 56%, yet that still leaves many without long-term financial security. When you pair this with the physical toll of construction work, economic cycles, and workforce migration, it's easy to see why many are choosing early retirement or career changes.

Forward-thinking firms are responding. Formal mentorship programs, succession planning, and targeted leadership development are helping transfer knowledge while investing in the next generation. Emerging trends such as modular construction, prefabrication, and early trade involvement are also reshaping how expertise is shared — creating continuity even as teams evolve.

Still, this is not a short-term fix. It will take deliberate effort across schools, trade programs, and professional networks to attract and prepare the next generation. The mission is clear: to inspire future talent to view healthcare construction not just as a job, but as a vocation — one that defines our built environment and supports the well-being of every community we serve.

Take heart. This industry has always risen to meet complex challenges. With intention, collaboration, and shared purpose, we can ensure that the environments of care continue to reflect the best of who we are — and the best of those who came before us. Be well and safe in the meantime.

Mike Wood

SPMT Group, Senior VP Strategic Initiatives



We build genuine relationships. Serving as your trusted partner, delivering expert guidance with solutions that provide long-term value.

www.spmtgroup.com