

TGBa Designs “Stand-Out” Auburn Regional Cancer Center

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Completed in May 2010, the new Auburn Regional Cancer Center located in the Auburn Regional Medical Plaza fulfills the vision of the founders for a regional destination cancer center in South King County. This 55,000sf building is anchored by 19,000sf Capital Oncology, which occupies the first and much of the second floor of

the Center. TGBa, the architectural design firm for the Plaza (shell and core building), was impressed with the stakeholders’ holistic patient care vision, which offers complete outpatient oncology services including chemotherapy and radiation therapy at a single location.

The Medical Plaza offers ancillary hospital services, as well. The Assistant Administrator for Auburn Regional Medical Center, Pat Bailey, said, “The original vision for

the Plaza, while ambitious, didn’t include physician office space. But we’ve had significant community growth and subsequently, hospital service needs, over the past few years.” Other features include a Community Resource Room, with the adjacent garage providing ample parking to not only the Center employees and patients, but also to nearby businesses.

The developer, Ensemble Real Estate, brought in TGBa during the



Auburn Regional Cancer Center, Auburn, WA

protracted planning stage. Ensemble’s Ivan Hilton explained, “We’d started with another architecture firm that didn’t work out. TGBa gave us their ‘A’ team, which included Kent Gregory, Tim Sadler, Melissa Kelii and Gina Dais.” Gregory, a TGBa principal, was highly involved throughout the project, another aspect Hilton appreciated. “They were responsive, flexible and wonderfully creative problem-solvers.” An example was when TGBa worked with BNBuilders to address the boggy ground of the building site. They used geo-piers, a highly reliable, cost-effective stabilization method, to support the tilt-up construct. TGBa joined a project in-progress, which meant tight deadlines. Luckily, one of the project partners was Strategic Ancillaries, a developer of turnkey solutions for physician-

owned practices with whom they had a history of collaboration. Strategic Ancillaries’ Kevin McHugh praised TGBa’s ability to handle complex issues, such as a late-date equipment change within the PET/CT component of the oncology center. “All design and rough-in aspects had to be adjusted without interruption to the construction cycle or delivery date. Other design firms would have been paralyzed by the magnitude of the changes, but TGBa didn’t miss a beat.”

BNBuilders’ Mark Ronish agreed, “Responsiveness and flexibility makes the difference between a good architecture firm and a great one. They capably addressed even the most complicated specifications, like those for the linear accelerator’s (radiation treatment) concrete housing.”

Marrying function and form to

requirements and vision required close collaboration between stakeholders and the design-build team. The City required a traditional appearance that would meld into the old downtown’s look. At the same time, the Center wanted a botanical, Pacific Northwest feel. Kent Gregory, TGBa principal, said, “They had a very clear idea of the image it should project.” TGBa’s Melissa Kelii and Gina Dais were instrumental in bringing the vision to life.

“We presented the concept of a botanical garden,” said Kelii. “Think of walking under a canopy of trees with light trickling through.” Then came a favorite design moment. “We discovered that one physician, Dr. Dustan Osborn, was an incredible nature photographer.” Once they learned that the doctor used his photography in patient care, to

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Building Spaces for Health and Healing

the point of gifting patients with pieces they admire, it became a must to include his works throughout the space. “They brought a personal touch to the entire concept.”

The garden concept featured many curved elements throughout – the garden pathways, the ceiling soft-fits’ shape, even the desks – softening the entire aspect. Kelii said, “It’s intended to be very meditative, an easy stroll for the patients, cocooning them from outside bustle.” Textural finishes brought the outside in, such as using concrete flooring intermixed with recycled glass for a terrazzo look that was cost-effective. The working sundial (a favorite of all involved) at the community entrance added a touch of whimsy to the outdoor environment.

Particularly welcome were the infusion area’s natural, warm touches; patients may spend anywhere from 20 minutes to lengthy hours receiving treatment. Gregory said they learned something new about the process. “It’s very communal – the patients draw support from each other. What the physicians wanted from us was to create a very flexible area.” TGBa designed a highly reconfigurable space that allows patients to either gather and share experiences, or have private time.

Patient focus was evident throughout the design. Dais mentioned the radiation therapy side, which featured a separate entry. “Patients who come regularly for their treatment know the routine and do self check-in, go directly to the dress-

ing room and the treatment waiting area. The design and process gives them a measure of control over their treatment not often seen in cancer centers.”

TGBa’s knowledge and caring made for happy clients. “They listened to us and provided excellent follow through,” said Bailey, adding that the “spectacular” building met their needs and budget. TGBa can add the new South King County destination for cancer care to their roster of successful health-care facility projects.

For more information on TGBa, visit www.tgbarchitects.com or call 425-778-1530.

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