

ARCHITECTURAL SHOWCASE

CANCER CENTER

NTDSTICHLER Architecture SAN DIEGO, CA, AND **CTA, Inc.** BILLINGS, MT

Benefis Healthcare Sletten Regional Cancer Institute GREAT FALLS, MT



Project category: New construction (completed December 2005)

Chief administrator: John Goodnow, CEO for Benefis Healthcare, (406) 455-5470

Firms: NTDSTICHLER Architecture, (858) 565-4440; CTA, Inc., (406) 248-7455

Design team: Wayne Hunter, AIA, ACHE, Principal-in-Charge; Steve Ward, AIA, Project Architect; Linda Mitchell, CID, Principal, Interior Design (NTDSTICHLER Architecture); James G. Shepard, AIA, Principal-in-Charge; Jeff Hultgren, AIA, Project Manager (CTA, Inc.); General Contractor (Sletten Construction Company)

Photography: J K Lawrence Photography

Total building area (sq. ft.): 57,082

Construction cost/sq. ft.: \$233

Total construction cost (excluding land): \$13,327,188

"Lighting the Path with Compassion and Care" was the theme of the new Sletten Regional Cancer Institute in Great Falls, Montana. The facility features a beacon of light perched on top of a spiral, stone-clad light tower. The exterior copper-clad canopy and natural-stone columns make the appearance more like that of a hunting lodge than a healthcare facility.

The lobby has comfortable seating vignettes arranged around an eight-foot, double-sided fireplace with a custom wrought-iron fire screen of water lilies and calla lilies. The ambience is extended throughout the facility with warm, subtle colors (a sage, sand, slate gray, and russet color palette) and materials replicated from the natural environment. Interior signage

has prairie-grass panels of information framed in alder wood and copper. Overhead wrought-iron signage stringers identify key destinations.

The Healing Garden features winding paths of engraved porcelain pavers to celebrate the generous contributions of community members, a 10-foot waterwall flowing into a bubbling stream, and trees scaled to the 40-foot, sculptured alder-wood ceiling. The theme continues with lanterns and street lamps in the Healing Garden. A DNA double-helix symbol is designed in the marble floor and connects the waterwall to the stream at the opposite end of the garden. A grand piano plays arrangements to calm the spirit and heal the soul. The Meditation Room features artistic



glass panels and prisms, celebrating the expression of light.

The Institute includes a Resource Center, Radiation Therapy, and a Personal Appearance Center that features a Salon for wig fitting, a breast prosthesis room, retail space, and a massage therapy room. The Hope Education Center has alder-wood wainscot walls and ceiling cornices with insets of Montana-wildlife pewter icons and wrought-iron and alabaster wall sconces. A Café with cabaret tables and chairs offers a nourishing respite area.

Even technical spaces create a sense of calm. In the Linear Accelerator room, the low-voltage star ceiling features a constellation of the Western hemisphere, while



the wood-appearing flooring and acrylic-paneled walls of grass, wheat, and lilacs diminish feelings of anxiety and fear. The Infusion Therapy area has zigzagged patient bays to honor patient privacy and provide optimum views to a separate healing garden.

Light, colors, sound, nature, water, and the beauty of art create a unique environment where caring and healing can soothe the body and touch the soul.