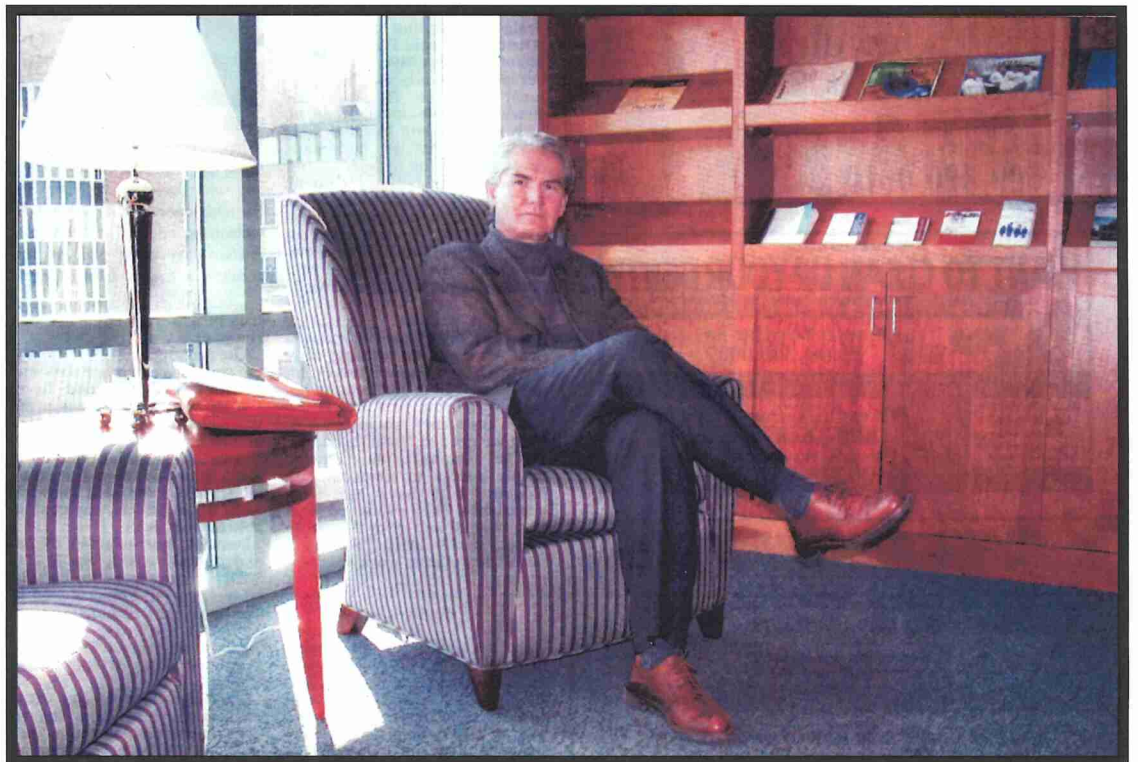




Bill Horin/Special to THE SENTINEL
An exterior view of the Shore Memorial Cancer Center at night.



Bill Godfrey/THE SENTINEL
Architect Steve Fenwick of Linwood sits in the Shore Memorial Cancer Center he and his staff designed for Shore Memorial Hospital. Fenwick worked closely with Shore Memorial to design a center that was professional and welcoming to patients and their families.

Linwood architect worked with hospital to design new cancer center in Somers Point

Building had to fit historic street; interior had to be welcoming and professional

By **BILL GODFREY**
The Sentinel

SOMERS POINT – When Shore Memorial Hospital officials decided several years ago it was time for a new on-site cancer treatment center, they knew they needed to combine a state-of-the-art facility with a warm welcoming environment that fit into the Victorian-style landscape along Shore Road in the city.

They knew the task would be a challenge. Hospital officials interviewed three different architectural design firms before deciding on S.J. Fenwick Associates, headed by registered architect Steve Fenwick in nearby Linwood.

“We knew this was the most important thing in our patients’ lives,” said

SMH public relations representative Barbara Henry. “We needed clinical sophistication with compassionate care. We said to Steve, ‘We want you to make this warm and fuzzy. Can you do that?’”

The Shore Memorial Cancer Center opened in September with wood trim, warm colors, and plenty of natural light while keeping with the aesthetic sense of the neighborhood.

Fenwick, said Henry, delivered the goods.

“To deliver this kind of environment in this area is very nice for a patient,” said Henry. “This facility is close to home and convenient for people at the shore.” Steve (“and my staff” interrupted Fenwick) made it happen.”

The 28,000 square-foot, \$10.5 million cancer center is designed around a \$1.7 million cancer treatment machine known as a linear accelerator.

As Fenwick was designing the building he knew that cold stainless steel wasn’t what patients, administrators, doctors or staff wanted. Cherry wood with a warm russet hue was used throughout the building, including in the foyer, for cabinets, and as trim. Sculptured carpet was chosen instead of industrial-fiber flooring. Metal framing was colored a deep boysenberry and the furniture was matched with the carpet. In addition, large windows were chosen to allow significant doses of natural light in the structure. Fenwick included these details while working with the architectural confines set forth by the City of Somers Point

and the Somers Point Historical Committee.

“We presented a smaller face on Shore Road,” said Fenwick. “We started with a box and then carved it, then we sent those plans to the city. We used the slope (of Brighton Avenue) to our advantage. Attention to detail makes the difference.”

Fenwick pointed out some of the small victories that make the building’s profile such a success. Large air circulation units that normally are exposed on top of a building were instead installed slightly below ground level and camouflaged with a decorative wall. A portion of the linear accelerator was installed below grade level, allowing for a smaller building facade on Shore Road and further reducing the mass of the building on the historic street. Fenwick also integrated the landscape architecture with the rest of the structure.

“Part of our mission was to design a building that fit the streetscape,” said Fenwick. “The historic committee was concerned and rightly so. The equipment had to fit into the streetscape. We added some hi-tech windows and blended them in, which gives the building a sense of being up to date.”

“We see the building through the eyes of our patients,” said oncology department administrative director Donna Cericola who, along with radiation oncology director Donna Kilgour, provided valuable input to Fenwick.

“It was a team that selected the architects, but what I was looking for was a comfort level with the firm we would be working with. (Fenwick and Associates) buildings fit so well in our community; their work in our area is beautiful and I knew they would listen to what we needed,” said Cericola. “The ‘Donnas’ (as Fenwick fondly refers to Cericola and Kilgour) both have long-term experience. They explained what they wanted and gave it to us to fulfill,” said Fenwick. “We had to make the building work, that was primary.”

Beginnings

The new cancer center project began in 2002. Staff members realized the existing center had outgrown its basement location and the aging linear accelerator was a major concern. A new state-of-the-art linear accelerator wouldn’t fit in the existing vault so the hospital’s Health Foundation decided it was time to raise money and develop plans for a stand-alone facility outside the hospital. Land the hospital owned at the corner of Shore Road and Brighton Avenue was identified as the ideal location and a legacy fundraising campaign was begun in 2002.

Barbara Henry explained that SMH has a long-standing relationship with the University of Pennsylvania and its cancer network, but hospital officials knew they needed something close to home to serve the community better. They wanted to be able to offer a wide range of services, including radiation oncology, supportive and continuing care, clinical research, cancer education prevention and early detection programs at the shore. One of the primary goals of the undertaking was providing these services in a warm supportive environment.

The architect selection committee was aware of other structures Fenwick had designed in the region. A press release indicated the selection committee liked Fenwick’s sensitivity to existing streetscapes, noting that Shore Road is one of the oldest streets in America, and said Fenwick’s team of architects was comfortable to work with.

Fenwick was selected in 2002 and groundbreaking was in 2003. SMH wanted the center completed quickly, but Fenwick said the fast pace was welcomed.

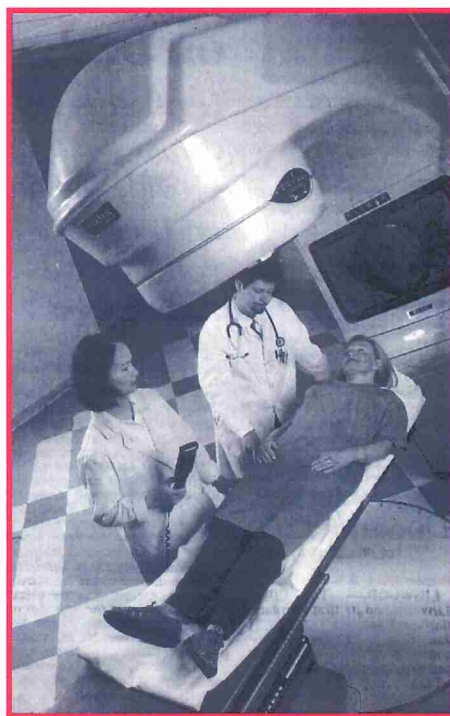
“Working quickly keeps the focus,” said Fenwick. “It helps keep the flow of information fresh.”

The first floor of the center houses the radiation therapy department including the linear accelerator. The accelerator is a tool that delivers pinpoint doses of radiation in a way that minimizes dosages to surrounding tissue. The room used to house the accelerator, called a vault, must be at least 30 feet wide with seven-foot-thick concrete walls. A 5,400-pound metal door separates the treatment room. The first floor also houses a reception area and lobby, a library with internet access, a scanner room, conference room, dressing rooms and other areas. The second floor has offices, conference rooms, and the cancer program department. The third floor houses the information systems department and records area. The cancer center is linked with the hospital’s main building with fiber optic cables and pneumatic tubing.

“The links connect the hospital campus so there’s no need for one massive building,” said Henry.



Bill Horin/Special to THE SENTINEL
What Shore Memorial Hospital wanted for its new Cancer Center – and what Linwood architect Steve Fenwick delivered – was a warm, welcoming interior that was also professional home to the linear accelerator used to treat patients.



Built in just 13 months the center opened Sept. 9, 2004.

Henry said response from patients and staff has been outstanding. Many are pleased with the cool, soothing colors, the attention to detail, the wood trim, and the flow of the new building. Cericola agrees.

“For our patients it gives them a sense of warmth and they can tell by the look of the building the care will be sophisticated. The remarks of the patients are how

you judge. We felt it was 100 percent everything we hoped it would be and more,” she said.

Fenwick said he was happy to be a part of building the center. “If you build a bad building it will slow you down each day, while building it right will continually assist you in achieving your goals,” said Fenwick.