

July 2018



Properties

NORTHEAST OHIO'S MONTHLY REALTY, CONSTRUCTION & ARCHITECTURE MAGAZINE

Handled With Care

Altenheim Senior Living
expands campus with skilled
nursing, rehab facilities



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By Doug Bardwell | Photos by Massery Photography

With the aging of 20 million members of the silent generation and 70+ million baby-boomers, there certainly is a growing need for more skilled facilities to handle this population's specialized needs. At Altenheim Senior Living, a not-for-profit life plan community, a full spectrum of services is available for clients.

Construction just completed on two new buildings at its four-building campus at the corner of Pearl and Shurmer roads in Strongsville. The single-story, 32,000-square-foot Altenheim Therapy Rehab Center is the new face for the campus, easily visible from busy Pearl Road. To the east is a two-story, 38,000-square-foot addition named Shurmer Place Memory Assisted Living.

With completion of this \$26.2-million project, Altenheim can now provide short-term rehabilitative therapy, skilled nursing, home health care, private duty nursing, assisted and independent living, as well as memory care.

Over a century of service

Looking for a way to give back to the community, the German-American

Ladies Society started Altenheim on the west side of Cleveland in 1887. Translated from German, Altenheim means home for the aged.

"With only \$260 in cash, they incorporated and began looking for benefactors," explains Paul Psota, CEO of Altenheim Senior Living. "Many people were interested but would not provide the funds until they broke ground. So, with a leap of faith, they began building the home for the aged. Five years later, they completed the project and opened the home, debt-free."

Opening in 1892 at West 77th Street and Detroit Road, Altenheim continued to serve the aging population in that location until 1980. Needing more space, they began looking for a nursing-style facility elsewhere.

Strongsville had an existing 100-bed nursing facility that was available, and it had room for expansion. With an ability to grow and available adjacent land, Altenheim began to envision the entire range of services it could provide, so it purchased the property.

As a non-profit entity, Altenheim provides a wide variety of services, not only to its residents, but to the community as well. It offers meals, home care and therapy to home-bound patients in the surrounding communities. Last year, it served more than 7,000 meals to home-bound seniors with assistance from the Strongsville Women's League.

In 1999, Altenheim purchased the adjacent parcel, enlarging the campus to 16-1/2 acres, and built Shurmer Place for assisted living care.



ENHANCED RESOURCES A range of services are offered at the new 38,000-square-foot Altenheim Therapy Rehab Center, including occupational, physical and speech therapies. Specialties include orthopedic, stroke and cardiac rehab.

Not long after, it added on to the project. "That was our first project for Altenheim, building an addition to the assisted living facility back in 2013-14," says George Roth, president of Augere Construction Company.

"Now, with the latest expansion, we have 123 apartments and suites in Shurmer Place," explains Psota. "We've also purchased an out-patient therapy practice, and with this new 32-bed therapy rehab center, we can offer the typical two-three weeks of post-operative care people need before returning home."

Long-range planning

"Grasping the vision of defining the full continuum of care on this campus, and following Altenheim's profound commitment to innovation, we began to do full-campus planning five years ago," says Cornelia (Cee Cee) Hodgson,

principal of C.C. Hodgson Architectural Group.

"Altenheim really had a strong commitment to innovation, and insisted on evidence-based design," recalls

"Grasping the vision of defining the full continuum of care on this campus, and following Altenheim's profound commitment to innovation, we began to do full-campus planning five years ago."

Cornelia (Cee Cee) Hodgson

C.C. Hodgson Architectural Group

Hodgson. "As one of only 12 firms in the nationwide Planetree Visionary Design Network, we follow these design principles to create healing environments."

Planetree is an organization, based in Connecticut, that has been studying hospitals and health care, and has come up with 10 principles on how to best care for both patients and their families. Two architectural components of the 10 include creating healing environments and designs that are therapeutic.

"All 10 principles have been utilized here today," says Hodgson. "We created plans and then Altenheim evaluated them. After a period of time, they would call us back with more ideas and we would revisit the design."

One of the initial goals was to expand the short-term rehab facilities. The other was to add a memory care residence as a second component.

"In addition, Paul had given us the directive that he wanted a stronger visual presence on Pearl Road," explains Hodgson. Before this project, the main entrance to Altenheim was on Shurmer



SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT Nature is visible throughout the rehab center, with views of trees planted outside or the giant mural of a mountainside in the physical therapy room (top). Outside in the well manicured courtyard, curved and ramped concrete walkways offer a full range of mobility options to be practiced among beautiful garden plantings and a waterfall (bottom).



WARM WELCOME On the eastern end of the campus is the new, two-story, 38,000-square-foot Shurmer Place Memory Assisted Living facility, which houses totally secured, memory assisted living units.

Road, a primarily residential street off Pearl Road. The portion of the facility that actually fronted on Pearl Road was the delivery area.

"It was only natural at that point to take advantage of the additional acquired land fronting Pearl Road, and we used that to create billboard architecture for the rehab center with its own entrance," says Hodgson. "Rooted in their heritage, we designed the rehab center to look like a large German lodge."

Starting construction

"Before we could even begin, there was an old sewer line that ran right along the edge of the original parcel," recalls Hodgson, "and we couldn't build over that. Once Augere got an estimate on relocating it to the edge of the new property, we began to see all the possibilities offered by the site."

But, that wasn't the only challenge.

"Buried under the footprint of the new buildings were the remnants of an old bridge abutment from Route I-71," says James Stewart II, vice-president of

Augere Construction Company. "That had been used as fill for this property, to fill in an old lake bed, so before we could start building, that all had to be excavated and replaced with clean dirt."

Augere Construction served as construction manager as well as general

"We met monthly for almost a year before beginning work, revising our budget with each meeting, so that when we began, everyone was comfortable with the design and the budget."

James Stewart II

Augere Construction Company

contractor, self-performing all the finish carpentry.

"Luckily, we met monthly for almost a year before beginning work, revising our budget with each meeting, so that when we began, everyone was comfortable with the design and the budget," explains Stewart.

Strongsville is known for its multiple inspections and on this project, there were approximately 700. "I can't stress enough how good the Mayor and the building department people were to work with," Roth says.

"That's true," echoes Stewart. "They did whatever they needed to do to keep us on schedule, sometime scheduling three or four inspections on the same day. I could also go into their office and come out with an answer in 10 minutes."

"I think the quality of Augere's work had something to do with it as well," says Psota. "One of the inspectors informed us that this was the best-run project going in town at the time."

Altenheim Therapy Rehab Center

Entering off Pearl Road, the welcoming center resembles a large, timbered alpine lodge with floor-to-peak glass. Inside the welcoming center, one will find the concierge desk and comfortable seating across from a stacked-stone fireplace. Uplighting along the walls and a



HOMELIKE SETTING Dining rooms and activity spaces are laid out on either side of the open plan kitchen, where residents can watch the cooking staff prepare meals from their table, or they can sit at a low, bar-style counter wrapping around one corner of the kitchen.

large globe-shaped chandelier provide illumination in the evening hours.

Even inside, everyone is still connected with the environment with windows all around. Nature is visible everywhere, with views of trees planted outside or the giant mural of a mountainside in the physical therapy room.

Off to the left of the welcoming center is the entrance to the outpatient therapy area. In the therapy area, patients will benefit from the latest in specialized equipment. A HydroWorx300 is a walk-in, underwater treadmill that can be filled with warm water in under three minutes. Other popular equipment include a Biodex Unweighing System for weight bearing therapy, a BioStep 2 for low impact, total body exercise and BioSway, a portable balance assessment instrument.

In order to prepare people to return to home activity, the whole range of home experiences has been recreated in the rehab center.

“From the start,” says Melodie Roach, executive vice-president/owner of Therapy in Motion, “we looked at what we could provide that would set us apart and help us excel and be different, while

providing all types of assistance to those in therapy.”

Therapists can work with clients inside the therapy room via a wide, multi-tiered stairway that was specially designed by the architects for progressive therapy, as well as outdoors in the courtyard, where

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Melodie Roach
Therapy in Motion

they can practice walking on uneven surfaces like grass, gravel and mulch. Curved and ramped concrete walkways, among beautiful garden plantings and a waterfall, offer a full range of mobility options to be practiced. Tables and chairs offer the opportunity to sit and enjoy the natural surroundings.

Also, in a highly personalized approach, an area in the parking lot is reserved for patients to practice getting in and out of their own automobiles.

Inside, a large kitchen, a typical residential bedroom, a toilet and a laundry room all offer therapists the opportunity to work with clients, suggesting the safest way to perform typical home-based tasks.

To the east and south of the courtyard, 32 private rooms offer spacious accommodations to those spending time for rehabilitation. Each unit has a large restroom with roll-in/walk-in shower; adjustable bed; large, upholstered reclining chair; dining table and chairs; and 58” flat-screen TV. Food is available by room service or patients can eat at the pub, enjoying a glass of wine or a beer.

Rehabilitation services offered at Altenheim include occupational, physical and speech therapies. Specialties include orthopedic, stroke and cardiac rehab.

Shurmer Place Memory Assisted Living

On the eastern end of the campus is the new two-story Shurmer Place

ACCOMMODATING CAREGIVING

The newly constructed Shurmer Place Memory Assisted Living facility includes 38 apartments (top), along with cozy gathering areas (middle) and a secured courtyard (bottom).

facility, which houses totally secured, memory assisted living units. Located off Shurmer Road, this portion of the property is in a more residential area and is quieter than the Pearl Road side. Hardieplank lap siding covers the first floor and Hardieshingle staggered-edge panels accent the second floor.

Especially designed for dementia and memory loss residents, the 38 apartments are laid out in six “neighborhoods” of six to seven suites each. Each neighborhood is represented with a distinct color that has been selected based on extensive research on color cues for memory-impaired people, to encourage a positive sense of being, as well as assist in wayfinding.

Eliminating long straight corridors, as anyone exits their room, they quickly find themselves in one of three common areas which define each neighborhood – the hearth room, a conservatory or a media/tv room – where socialization is encouraged. Immediately adjacent is one of four common dining and activity rooms. Every dining room has wood-plank ceilings with deep-coffered, gleaming white beams.

Dining rooms and activity spaces are laid out on either side of the open plan kitchen, where residents can watch the cooking staff prepare meals from their table, or they can sit at a low, bar-style counter wrapping around one corner of the kitchen. Just as the ‘soul’ of the home is the kitchen, everything expands out from the kitchen in this building as well. Even the color of dinnerware is selected to enhance the visual appeal of the food to those with memory issues.

The second-floor plan mirrors the first-floor identically except for the outdoor areas. The first floor has multiple “porches” with two secured courtyards for the residents to get outside if desired. There is also one large patio area for walking with a garden in the center, accented by a



ARTISTIC ADDITION A focal point in the garden is a unique copper tree sculpture with branches and leaves which create a waterfall.

unique copper tree sculpture with branches and leaves that create a waterfall. Upstairs, there are three four-season rooms, one for each neighborhood.

Each suite has separate areas for living room, bedroom, kitchen/dining and bath. Suites range from 415 to 542 square feet. Each suite is comfort -controlled by single or double PTAC units. Kitchens include a sink, cabinets and an undercounter refrigerator. An abundance of natural daylight is available through multiple windows. Large, white, barn-style doors roll to close off the bathroom, which provides privacy without disrupting the floor area with a door swing.

Like the rehab center, all suites in the memory care building are completely soundproofed with sound deadening insulation in the walls and ceilings. All public areas are controlled by roof-top HVAC units, concealed from sight. Four large Kohler generators provide enough power to serve 100% of the outlets on the campus. Lighting is primarily LED.

Many ways to measure success

Less than one month after the ribbon-cutting, 25 people have already moved into the memory care residence.

"One of the big decision-makers for people is when they find out that we are a life-plan community," says Beth Seese, director of memory assisted living. "People want socialization for their loved one and that's something we provide."

"Since there isn't a pharmaceutical solution to dementia, and we don't see one in the pipeline," says Donna Casey, director of marketing for Altenheim Senior Living, "we design our programming with purposeful activity to ensure each person has their best possible day."

Two quick stories suggest that the team has completed a most successful project. One family member recently told Seese that since moving into the memory assisted living residence, "Mom is smiling again, something she hasn't done in 10 years."



Photo by Doug Bardwell

Another family member of a Shurmer Place resident told Psota that the resident put off some elective surgery until she knew the Rehab Center was going to be completed. She didn't want to go anywhere else for post-operative recovery.

"It's amazing how everyone's vision gelled here," adds Stewart. "Looking back on the renderings C.C. Hodgson did 18 months ago, and looking at the building today, other than a color change here or there, nothing significant has changed. The design was right on where we are today."

"We first began working with Altenheim five years ago, and to sit here now and see how their vision came together is truly amazing," says Roth. "They really have a visionary board of directors; and bringing in the right architect, form followed function, giving us what you see here today."

"We were delighted to be invited to work on this project with an innovative client," reflects Hodgson. "The level of vision and dedication by everyone involved made this the success that it is. It was a very collaborative process."

As further evidence of Altenheim's success, it received its sixth five-star rating from the Centers of Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and received its Platinum Quality Designation, the highest available. Altenheim has also been named one of Ohio's Best Nursing Homes for 2018 by U.S. News & World Report.

To learn more about Altenheim Senior Living and available services, visit www.Aaltenheim.com. **P**

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