

BERGEN GARDENS

by LAURIE JONES



With an urgent need for accommodation for elderly residents in Manitoba, particularly those inflicted with cognitive challenges, Edison Properties engaged MMP Architects to design Bergen Gardens. This unique facility incorporates 149 assisted living suites and four Memory Care communities – or cottages as they are called – each with 12 residents. Two guest suites were included for visiting family members.

Scheduled to open in November 2022, the residence incorporates a Town Centre in the building that includes a store, a pub-style bar, and fireside lounge. Residents who live in the independent suites have access to service packages offering increased support to meet their needs as the years go on.

“One of the unique things at Bergen Gardens is the meal service,” says Robert Cornelius, capital development manager, Edison Properties. “We provide two meals a day for the 149 suites in assisted living, and three meals a day for the Memory Care residents. But we are also trying to meet them on their terms. If they want a meal outside of the regular hours, we accommodate them. Each Memory Care cottage also has its own residential kitchen where residents have supervised access after-hours. Edison Properties embraces the approach of ‘Welcome Home.’ We incorporated this

guiding principle into the memory care cottages; each entry has a residential-looking door where visitors are greeted and welcomed into their home.” It’s definitely different than the institutional models currently practiced in Manitoba care homes.

Unlike standard drywall construction, Bergen Gardens features Cross Laminated Timber (CLT), bringing a warm touch. “It was important for us to create a natural look with the actual wood,” says Cornelius. “The two-storey atrium has full glazing, which brings in plenty of natural light and residents can enjoy looking at the outdoor areas around the complex.”

Robert Wrublow, principal at MMP Architects and environmental gerontologist for the firm, explains he brought evidence-based design to the project. “The concept of Memory Care is not new to North America, but it is relatively new to Manitoba where the province currently does not recognize this intermediate level of care that falls between Supportive Housing and Personal Care Home [PCH]. But we know from research that Quality of Life becomes greatly compromised if you are panelled for PCH before you really need it, which unfortunately occurs in this Province too often. That’s where Memory Care fits in.”

Bergen Gardens will be Manitoba’s first care project where a true Evidence Based Design process is followed that



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identifies specific research, established outcomes, and informed design. The project will also undergo a full Post Occupancy Evaluation to assess the outcomes.

“Unlike other residences where people with dementia live in a locked unit and are segregated from other residents, Bergen Gardens was designed with a large atrium leading to the town centre where everyone who lives there can roam,” Wrublowsky explains. “They can leave their household and come and go in the atrium, which is still a secure environment, and mingle with others. We’ve also included activities in a play area for visiting children to include a true intergenerational environment.”

Jenni Joorisity, project architect at MMP Architects, notes that each of the four households on the memory care side of the community accommodates 12 residents and incorporates more than 150 evidence-based research design elements to assist residents to remain as independent as possible to the greatest extent of their capacity. “This is not set up like an institutional unit. Everyone has their own private room with a bathroom, but they share kitchens, living rooms, and dining rooms. There is also a

shared activity room and laundry,” she explains. “The focus is to reinforce the ever-so-vital activities of daily living and create a community.”

Joorisity says the true wow-factor of Bergen Gardens is the use of CLT and glulam post-and-beam for the structure. “We used black spruce from Quebec and it’s one of the first six-storey CLT buildings in Manitoba. The CLT is a substitute for concrete, which is more commonly used. The structure is essentially very thick wood floors instead of concrete. It enables the structure to provide the warm look.”

Jeremy Steski, project manager at Bird Construction Group says working with the CLT component of Bergen Gardens was an interesting change from most of the projects they do.

“I’ve always liked the aspect of working with wood, but we are limited in the heights of buildings constructed that way, and fire rating becomes an issue,” he explains. “Even when we do use wood, it gets covered in drywall to meet codes. This building is unique and has such a simple, warm finish.”

Steski concludes by saying the project is on time, with final touches underway and an anticipated completion in October for the official opening in November. **A**

LOCATION

1475 Molson Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba

OWNER/DEVELOPER

Edison Properties

ARCHITECT

MMP Architects Inc.

GENERAL CONTRACTOR

Bird Construction Group

STRUCTURAL CONSULTANT

Crosier Kilgour & Partners Ltd.

MECHANICAL/ELECTRICAL CONSULTANT

Tower Engineering Group

CIVIL CONSULTANT

Sison Blackburn Consulting Inc.

GEOTECHNICAL CONSULTANT

Dyregrov Robinson Inc.

TOTAL SIZE

216,007 square feet

TOTAL COST

\$61 million



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