

BUILDING HOPE TOGETHER



A NEW REGIONAL CANCER CENTER RESHAPES CARE IN REDDING

Already a critical medical hub for Northern California, Redding is on the cusp of a major expansion in regional health care as Dignity Health's Sierra Pacific Regional Cancer Center moves from vision to reality over the course of 2026. The \$70 million project is bringing comprehensive cancer services under one roof for the first time in decades, replacing a fragmented system that has long forced patients to navigate multiple locations for treatment, imaging, labs, aesthetics and support services.

"Currently we have three different sites that you have to go to receive services," says Mercy Medical Center Redding President G. Todd Smith. "There's one place for imaging, another for lab draws and still others for aesthetics and physical therapy." He acknowledges what every family facing cancer learns. "Cancer is hard enough on a personal level before adding the stress of trying to figure out where you're supposed to be for treatment."

For Smith, the mission is personal. "I've had multiple family members that have had cancer. I won't diminish how hard it is. But it means a lot to be able to provide these services to the community and know we're touching so many lives, because if you're not the individual with cancer, there are also the family and friends caring for that person. So I believe we're doing the right thing for the right reasons, and that's to take care of the individual and get them better so they can go on and live the rest of their lives."

The new 45,000-square-foot facility will house nearly every component of modern cancer care: radiation oncology with a new linear accelerator, infusion, medical oncology, imaging, lab, pharmacy, visiting specialists and supportive services. According to Robert Folden, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer at Mercy Medical Center Redding, it's imperative to keep this care local. "From a

continued on page 18



patient's perspective, the day is quickly coming where you'll be able to receive all of your care under one roof with the exception of some very esoteric or perhaps university-based treatment protocols. But even if a patient does seek care outside of the community, once they get that treatment protocol, we'll likely be able to administer it locally so they don't have to drive back and forth to places like San Francisco or Stanford. We're also setting up a space within the Cancer Center where subspecialty providers will be able to drive up and run clinics so that, again, patients don't have to travel. That, of course, will take some time to develop, but we already have two subspecialists interested and we're working to get more."

Smith agrees. "Cancer is hard enough without having to drive in your car for three hours after receiving chemo."

Construction of the Sierra Pacific Regional Cancer Center is on schedule, and occupancy is expected in the spring of 2026, followed by regulatory approvals over the summer.

"Our laboratory, our radiology group and our pharmacy must all go through a re-licensing process because it's a new site," Folden explains. "But the goal is a fully integrated, holistic center. Once those things that we have direct control over are stabilized, then we can turn our attention to what we can add next, depending on the need. Eventually, this will even include things like acupuncture and massage therapy."

The facility has also been designed with comfort in mind. "There's a reason why we put it down by the Sacramento River,"



Folden says. "It encapsulates regrowth and renewal. Who doesn't love to sit next to flowing water and draw energy from it? So while people are getting infusion therapy, they'll be on the second floor and looking to the west. It's a beautiful setting."

Smith echoes this sentiment. "We're going to have exterior walking trails for serenity and space where patients and their family can have privacy. We want a peaceful atmosphere that can be impactful in the right way for a patient where they can relax, get all the services they need and go home knowing that they're on the path of a cure or better health."

continued on page 21





The project is also transforming Mercy’s ability to recruit specialized physicians because, according to Folden, it offers the kind of collaborative environment care providers seek. “This is the type of center that physicians look for when they are coming out of training or when they’re looking for their next move. It’s a rallying cry when you have, for instance, the latest radiation technology that’s available. We’re also fortunate that we have a university close by, with Simpson University and the programs at Shasta College. From a medical perspective, we’ll continue to work with the universities and colleges to bring more programs that are important.” Redding itself is part of the pitch. Smith, a lifelong resident, says the city “stands up against any other town across the country,” highlighting the friendly community and natural environment.

Folden, who came to the region in 1979, calls it “a sportsman’s paradise,” adding, “If for some reason you don’t appreciate the

area that you’re in at the moment, you just have to drive about 30 minutes in any direction to find an entirely different topography.”

According to Folden, finding a work-life balance is a high priority for the hospital’s administration. “One of the principles we preach is that our physicians need to be happy in their work and fulfilled in the life that they create in this community. With that in mind, we truly make ourselves available to those doctors. I think if you asked 50 physicians if they had the cell number for the CEO or the COO, 49 would say yes.”

The community generosity toward the center has been overwhelming. “This community raised two times the amount of money that we originally projected,” Folden says. A poignant story illustrates the compassion he sees in Redding. “We had a veteran pass recently and we had an outpouring of what must have been 200 people who came to be at his bedside when they learned that he was going to die alone.”

Moments like that, Folden says, also reflect Mercy’s guiding philosophy. “Our hospital is rooted in the Sisters of Mercy. Part of their teaching is that we take care of people, whether they’re poor, hungry, unclothed or dying, and the Sisters were always there to lift that community up. It’s the expectation in the communities that we serve, it’s the tradition we aim to continue and I believe we’re living up to that.”

Smith distills it even further. “This is about building a healthier community,” he said. “That’s always been the approach, and it always will be.”

Story by Megan Peterson