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Landscape Architecture

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NEWS RELEASE

AUGUST 24, 2011

## LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS DESIGN GARDEN FOR HUNTERDON REGIONAL CANCER CENTER

“We can’t design regeneration but we can set the stage for regeneration to happen,” explained Michael Fleischacker, landscape architect and principal of Quercus Studio LLC and Assistant Professor of Environmental Design at Delaware Valley College. He and his business partner, landscape architect Jeff Charlesworth, spoke to a design review committee at Hunterdon Regional Cancer Center (HRCC) where their firm is offering pro bono design services for a healing garden on the Hunterdon Medical Center campus in Flemington, New Jersey. Their firm’s initial design presentation coincided with a National Landscape Architecture Awareness Day on August 17.

Lori Wyble, coordinator of Oncology Nutrition Services at HRCC, developed the idea for a healing garden and asked Quercus Studio to offer ideas to convert an outdoor space adjacent to the Cancer Center into an inviting place where patients, their family, friends, and hospital staff could step away from the stress of treatment into a restoring, natural four-season garden. Quercus Studio LLC, a specialist in regenerative design, took on the project to show how a small 1,500 square-foot outdoor space surrounded by hospital buildings and parking could restore and comfort patients and visitors.

Fleischacker explained his firm’s approach to design with a systems assessment of the site and its context, input from the many project stakeholders including hospital staff, nurses, administrators, volunteers and patients and a synthesis of this information in a Story of Place. “The Story of Place uncovers connections and relationships between a project’s living systems that ultimately shed light on the design solutions. It’s a process of discovery that leads to regenerative ideas.” says Fleischacker. The Quercus Studio design team described the basis for their design concepts: the restorative character of nature, a distilled woodland garden space that unfolds along a walking path, stone outcroppings and water features. They showed a series of schematic drawings to explain how they refine their design thinking to arrive at the concepts presented at the meeting. Fleischacker and Charlesworth referenced the healing qualities of natural surroundings, while viewing or enveloped in nature. They quoted recent studies that show measurable and lasting increases in cells that fight disease after individuals spend time walking in the woods. The Japanese use the word *Shinrin-yoku* or ‘forest bathing’ to describe short walks or restful respites in the woods as a form of mental and physical therapy.



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As a follow-up to this workshop presentation, committee members have supplied their thoughts and reactions to the Quercus plans which is leading to further design refinement. The final plan will be presented this fall.

Quercus Studio LLC is a landscape architecture, land planning and regenerative consulting firm based in Ringoes, New Jersey, and New Hope, Pennsylvania. Quercus, the botanical name for oak, is a climax species in our forest plant communities with high resource values for natural systems such as wildlife habitat, storm water management and recharge, and soil health and building. To the principals of Quercus Studio LLC, the Quercus tree is a symbol of regeneration.

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