

Project Case Study:

San Diego County Women's Detention Facility



Project Name San Diego County Women's Detention Facility

Project Location Santee, CA

Project Size 25 buildings, 1,216 beds

Building Type Correctional Facility

Project Team CGL Companies

HMC Architects

KMD Architects

Balfour Beatty Construction

San Diego County Sheriff's Department

Norix Furniture



Product List Attenda® Beds, Attenda Desks, Attenda Nightstands, Attenda Bookshelves, Forté™ Café Tables, Forté Chairs (including upholstered chairs), Integra Chairs, Stainless Steel Inteleastations®, EconoMax® Tables, Gibraltar™ Beam Seating, Hilltop Tables and Ironman® Clothes Hooks and Mirrors

CASE STUDY

WWW.NORIX.COM

DESCRIPTION:

The San Diego County Women's Detention Facility (SDCWDF) is a \$221 million project that is currently being constructed on a 45-acre site in Santee, CA. This new facility will replace the Las Colinas Detention Facility (LCDF), which has served as the county's adult women detention facility since 1979.

When complete, SDCWDF will include 25 buildings, 1,216 beds and more than 500,000 square feet of building floor space including housing units, administration facilities, medical facilities, food service areas, a visitation center, a learning resource center and accommodations for employment programs and other services.

Phase I construction of the project was completed on June 30, 2014 with expectations of moving inmates into the new facility in September. Phase II of the project, which is expected to be completed in early 2016, includes the demolition of the LCDF and the construction of a new lower level security housing unit at that site.



OVERALL PROJECT GOAL / PHILOSOPHY

The design, aesthetics and experience of SDCWDF falls in line with an emerging trend in corrections where facilities depart from the sterile and institutional feeling that has historically been found in these environments. This new trend makes use of color, art and landscaping to create a more normalized environment to benefit both inmates and staff. It also makes use of furniture that is more aesthetically pleasing, constructed of materials other than steel and is more residential in appearance. This humanistic approach to design is believed to decrease inmate violence and help reduce recidivism rates.

"Our design team researched this premise and studied facilities in Europe that have found success through the approach of humanizing correctional facilities," said Pam Maynard, Director of Interior Architecture for HMC Architects, a firm that is part of the team designing and building the facility. "This research confirms that the environments in which people live, learn, heal and are governed in, can affect us both psychologically and physiologically in both negative and positive ways depending on various environmental qualities."

Safety Goal: In correctional facilities, safety is paramount. The project team hoped to create a more normalized environment that would decrease violence and self-harm and keep both inmates and staff safe. In regards to furniture, the facility needed products that could be weighted and, in some cases, floor anchored. The project team also looked for products that helped eliminate ligature points and hiding spots for contraband. Additionally, they needed furniture that was durable and couldn't easily be disassembled and weaponized.

Aesthetic Goal: The team involved in the design and construction of the facility was tasked with creating an environment that was more humanized and conducive to rehabilitation. This included the use of multiple soothing colors, furniture with less institutional design, incorporation of increased natural daylight and large-scale photographs of natural outdoor settings throughout the facility. This also included the design of outdoor environments featuring furniture that will help inmates feel connected to the outside world.

Functional Goal: Paul Chastant, an architect who worked with the owners to plan the approach for the ultimate design of the facility, said, "Simple is always better when it comes to design. In the case of SDCWDF, the functional goal was to simplify movement and operational activities by creating open and direct site lines. This helps create increased visibility and accessibility for staff and inmates living and working within the facility."

Furniture Goal: Maynard said, "In the past, it appeared that the furniture was its own thing in correctional facilities. It had its own form. Its own color. We would design an environment and the furniture was just something we had to make do with." San Diego is different, she says. Regarding furniture, the facility needed products that had rounded corners and that could be ballasted to add weight to limit movement by inmates. It also was imperative that the furniture had no ligature points. And just as important, the facility needed to incorporate furniture that had aesthetically pleasing designs and colors that worked cohesively with the facility design and assisted in normalizing the overall environment.



"Research confirms over and over again that the environments in which people live, learn, heal and are governed in, can affect us both psychologically and physiologically in both negative and positive ways depending on various environmental qualities."

FURNITURE SELECTION PROCESS:

In early 2013, the owner's project team invited manufacturers to participate in a furniture showcase. Manufacturer representatives were each allowed one-hour presentations on their products. Additionally, furniture was evaluated for one month in a San Diego warehouse by staff and consultants. Norix representatives presented many lines of its furniture, including the Forté™ Series, Gibraltar™ Beam Seating, EconoMax® Tables, among several other products that are suitable for detention environments.

The project team also was interested in seeing products that were currently being used in facilities and visited the Los Angeles County Probation Department where they viewed Norix Furniture's Attenda® Bed.

“When they saw our products they instantly said ‘That’s it. That is what we are looking for,’” Sandy Heitman, Norix Furniture Project Manager, said. “I think they knew Norix for its durability and the fact that we are forward thinking. But in this case, it was all about timing. Just as we were giving our furniture a more normalized look without giving up durability, the team was looking to create a facility that incorporated that same philosophy.”

After seeing the Attenda bed, Norix representatives met with the project team and presented additional furniture options, including bookshelves, tables and other furniture pieces that are made for correctional environments.

“We just had everything they needed as far as furniture goes,” Heitman said. “They also were very conscious of the environment and what impact furniture would have on the facility in terms of volatile organic compounds. It was an added bonus that Norix products are GREENGUARD Gold certified and have met the stringent standards that come with this certification.”

As a result of the owner’s furniture showcase and Norix Furniture’s willingness to construct customized units of selected items, Norix was selected as the primary furniture provider for the project. Subsequently working with owner’s team, Norix designed and manufactured specific customized solutions to meet San Diego County’s specifications.

THE RESULT

After meeting with Norix representatives, the project team selected a variety of products that would be used for housing, common areas, medical facilities, the visitation building and various places outdoors. In total, SDCWDF will include the following Norix products:

- Custom Attenda Beds
- Attenda Desks
- Attenda Nightstands
- Attenda Bookshelves
- Forté Café Tables
- Forté Chairs (including upholstered chairs)
- Integra Chairs

Other products that will be used in the facility include Stainless Steel Inteleastations® for video visitation units, EconoMax® Tables, Gibraltar™ Beam Seating, Hilltop Tables and Ironman® Clothes Hooks and Mirrors.



“They also were very conscious of the environment and what impact furniture would have on the facility in terms of volatile organic compounds. It was an added bonus that Norix products are GREENGUARD Gold certified and have met the stringent standards that come with this certification.”

“The new Norix product lines are progressive, pleasing and markedly a large step forward for correctional furnishings,” Chastant said. “Our companies, including Norix, have invested a lot with the hope that what we are building in San Diego will be the future of corrections. SDCWDF is unique. Very unique.”

Aside from the furniture, the facility is definitely unlike any correctional facility you will see on television. Large-scale photos of beautiful landscapes are stretched across the walls in multiple dayrooms. The floors of the inmate rooms are stained concrete, while family visitation spaces feature carpet. Forté chairs are arranged in conversational squares as a way to encourage communication among inmates. Outside, Norix Hilltop Furniture is surrounded by landscaping that incorporates plants, bushes and trees that are comparable to what you would see in higher education settings.

“I am very pleased with the outcome so far. The environmental qualities of the spaces lend themselves to a more humanistic approach to detention,” Maynard said. “But it’s all about the people. We can talk about a chair or a light fixture or a wall color. But it all comes down to the people and the affect that this cohesive environment can have on the future of these women’s lives. And if it can contribute to a positive effect, that’s what I am most excited about.”

ABOUT NORIX GROUP:

Norix designs innovative, robust furniture that meets the real-world need for humanizing challenging environments. For more than 30 years, the company has served the behavioral healthcare, corrections, fire/rescue, military, shelter, public safety and variety of commercial industries by providing uniquely reliable furnishings for every application. All furniture is designed for safety, security and extreme durability. Norix furniture is extraordinary by design, surpassing industry standards for strength, safety and long-term performance. Aside from its durability, Norix products also come in aesthetically pleasing designs and colors and are made especially for facilities that require furniture that can humanize their environments.

The privately held company is headquartered in West Chicago, IL with consultative sales representatives and dealers throughout the U.S. In 2012, Norix launched Safe Environments, a news and information blog serving architects, designers, administrators and facility managers involved in the design, construction, and operation of challenging environments. For more information, call 800-234-4900 or visit www.norix.com.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

CGL Companies: <http://www.cglcompanies.com>

HMC Architects: <http://hmcarchitects.com>

KMD Architects: <http://www.kmdarchitects.com>

Balfour Beatty Construction: <http://www.balfourbeattyus.com>

San Diego County Sheriff’s Department: <http://www.sdsheriff.net>

Norix Furniture: <http://www.norix.com>

