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Left: Housing at the new Juvenile Urban Camp aims to provide a neighborhood feel.

Below: A Visiting Center is one of several areas for youth to meet with visiting family.

San Diego County Juvenile Urban Camp:

A Time for Change

By Darrell Stelling, AIA

San Diego County is wrapping up design of their new Juvenile Urban Camp with design-build team of DLR Group and Balfour Beatty. The team recently sat down to discuss how their new facility aligns and supports their philosophy of positive change through relationships with committed youth focused on healing, equity and transformation.

The team members included:

Marc Regier, SDC Chief Contracts and Programs; Timothy (Tim) Hancock, SDC Probation Department Division Chief Special Projects; Tom Hoerstman, SDC Project Manager, Public Works; Sandra (Sandy) McBrayer, CEO, The Children's Initiative; Daniel Luker, Senior Project Manager, Balfour Beatty; and Andrew (Andy) Cupples, FAIA, Justice Design Leader, DLR Group.

What prompted the change?

SANDY: Our current building was built in the early 1950s in a very different era of correction models. So, we took our county officials to see model programs and facilities across the country with rehabilitative, therapeutic model, moving away from systems of punishment and control. Our goal is to move toward a model to get youth whole, healthy and on the right track, so they don't head to the adult justice system. That coupled with research from Georgetown University Center for Juvenile Justice Reform and Council of Juvenile Justice Administrators, we were able to show that with a supportive facility and staff training youth could leave the juvenile system as productive citizens.

TIM: We are learning about best practices in our facilities and our current facilities didn't support those best practices. Combined with the fact that the buildings are nearly 70 years old, we had the opportunity to look at designing a new facility to

support and push forward best practices.

ANDY: The current facility is a 1950 linear juvenile hall. Today's philosophy is creating more home-like space in its approach to how we treat youth. The Youth in Custody Practice Model calls for safe, fair, and healthy environments to prepare, equip, empower, and increase positive youth and family experiences and enhanced community safety.

MARC: The San Diego County Board of Supervisors has long established its role as leaders in positive juvenile justice changes. They entrusted the SDC Probation Department, in designing and constructing a new Urban Camp, to turn this vision into reality to continue helping youth and families successfully exit the justice system.

What are the project goals or outcomes?

SANDY: The goal is to get young people healthy and thriving and back on track to be productive citizens. We start that in the facility, and when they exit between probation supervision and community organizations we surround that young person and their family with support, helping them be successful. Often in poor communities, youth come without stability and all the services they need to thrive. It's more than just addressing a crime committed, but recognizing what is going on in their lives that led to the crime and what support they and their families need.

DANIEL: As I sat through the design process, I was struck by how family is undefined, and the extended "family" definitions include other caring

adult role models so that those vital connections with positive people are present, and they can regularly visit the youth.

SANDY: We call it un-defining families. We let the young person decide who can positively influence their lives. In most facilities across the country visitation is one to two days a week for one hour per client. But research has demonstrated that the more a caring adult visits a child while they are locked up, the better they do in the facility, not only in reduced violence, but academically, and on reentry.

ANDY: Another goal was to provide a variety of spaces for visiting. We do have a visiting center with open views to the campus, but we also have the flexibility for potential use of the culinary arts area for kids to serve a meal to their family, or to use the dining hall, the amphitheater, and the gymnasium.

MARC: This facility is designed to promote positive relationships between youth and staff to build safety in relationship. Getting the program, the staff and the facility all to converse is why we are excited to work with Balfour Beatty and DLR Group, to make those features and attributes a reality in this facility.

How are you creating home-like environments?

SANDY: We know we can never build a home, but it is as home-like and normalized as we can get. Our youth get out of bed, eat breakfast, leave and go to school, leave school to go to lunch, etc. The old model of keeping kids restricted to their unit for all these activities isn't equipping them to make life choices. We

aren't soft on kids or crime, but it will be a place where youth and staff are supported.

TOM: Home-like is also about the complex of buildings resembling a neighborhood and housing units should resemble houses around the courtyard. It's a neighborhood feeling.

MARC: We give youth their own room, and fewer youth in the unit, to have more ability to breath. It's not home but home-like. We aren't asking youth to do everything in one building.

ANDY: Each 12-bed unit will have its own front door and stoop and its own designation and identity through the use of graphics and signage. Rather than one big dayroom the space offers seating areas and options, an area for relaxing or working at a desk for example.

TIM: This is a place where they can connect and develop relationships and comradery. They go to meals and school together, creating the environment of belonging and pride in what they accomplish. They leave feeling proud that they learned something and can look back and draw from those experiences.

How will this address mental and emotional health?

SANDY: There is a shift in corrections to train staff in a different way using topics from trauma-informed care, to adolescent brain development, to implicit bias training. We are not trying to catch kids doing something wrong, but recognizing when kids are starting to deregulate and then redirecting them. Our goal is for staff to be trained together and speak the same language whether clinicians, probation or teachers.

MARC: We are flipping the paradigm from "what did you do" to focusing on "what happened to you that led you to commit an act to get involved in the justice system." We are tasked to build a facility to support their treatment and improve their wellbeing.

What are some of the challenges?

MARC: One challenge understanding that safety is really in relationships. It's not in tools or physical interventions, but in de-escalations and recognizing if something is about to occur. We provide staff with tools to feel safe, otherwise they won't feel happy and able to help youth be successful. So, the challenge is helping staff understand this new facility and philosophy is not only to make their lives easier but to help them succeed and make them safer.

SANDY: Looking at job descriptions for recruitment and retention, probation has become a reformer in who they hire and what message they send about getting youth back on track. We will be adding new classes to the staff syllabus in understanding the new facility as they transition over.

ANDY: To create that engaged

environment we had to get creative. For instance, not using a typical control desk in the dayroom for staff to sit behind. Instead we created a counter where they can have conversations. If they want to sit down, they go sit with the kids. It eliminates another element of "us vs. them mentality."

What do you hope will be said about

this facility after it's been operational for 12 months?

TIM: Best decision we ever made... That we did the right thing. I want staff to look back and see we thought about all the things that matter to them to do their job well. And while it won't be perfect in everyone's eyes, will bring some satisfaction.

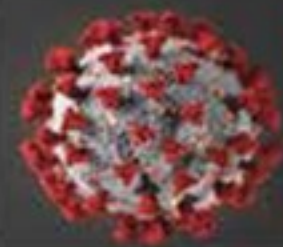
SANDY: Last year Probation took

a bold step and hired a former juvenile client as a probation officer. She wants to make a difference to young people, to help them become healthier and thrive. I want to see our youth come back as probation staff, not as residents, which will show a level of success in how our new facility and system of support works.

See *The New Face of Justice*, page 41 ➔

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The center is designed in orientation to the site, in many special landscaping features, glazing, highly insulated walls and very sophisticated mechanical and lighting systems to be a most energy efficient courthouse, which soon after verification, will be awarded LEED Platinum designation, the first courthouse to achieve this designation in Massachusetts.

This comprehensive Judicial Center for Lowell achieves goals of functionality, maintainability, accessibility, security, and sustainability all housed in a structure that speaks to dignity and is a positive contribution to the historic City of Lowell.

Universal Accessibility

The center is universally accessible: the commuter rail station and local bus depot are a short walk away; a new parking facility by Lowell is being constructed to provide easy access for those arriving by car; bike racks are on site as well as immediately adjacent handicapped parking spaces; and secure parking for judges and senior staff as well as secure access for detainees through the sallyport are also provided. Sloped walks traversing a 25-foot change in grade across the site lead to an entrance plaza without any steps. This universally accessible concept continues within the entire building with ample circulation space, multiple elevators, accessible raised judge's benches, abundant wheelchair spaces in courtrooms, audio and visual

technology, and glazed stairwells at each end of the public galleries to encourage walking while enhancing wellness.

Project Origins

The project originally began with a certifiable building study and was the largest of three pilot studies for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Division of Capital Asset Management

and Maintenance (DCAMM)'s ZNE initiatives. A goal in the design of this courthouse is to maximize energy efficiency and it is expected to achieve a LEED-platinum certification. The building contains a chilled beam HVAC system, photo-voltaic panels, and a sophisticated building envelope. Building systems and controls among many design features were specified to

achieve performance targets 40% better than code.

In addition to Finegold Alexander Architects, the Project Team included: Dimeo Construction, CM; ART, Electrical Engineer; Stefura Associates, Interiors; ARUP, Mechanical Engineer; Stanley, Door Hardware, and RSE Associates, Structural Engineer.



About Us

The Construction and Maintenance Institute for Criminal Justice Agencies (CMI) established in 1994 is a non-profit organization of employees and private employed professionals who work in the correctional field. The organization is dedicated as a clearinghouse for information related to correctional facilities design, construction, and maintenance.



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The New Face of Justice, from page 33

DANIEL: In the same way that the team refers to the Missouri model, this will be the facility that will be the next benchmark and model to build on.

ANDY: So, as we work toward cultural change, I want to see all these kids and families feel that they were treated with a sense of equity, as human beings, as unique individuals. That sends a whole different message to the community about what we do.

MARC: We hope to be inundated by requests from other agencies to come see what is possible when community providers, community residents, justice reform partners all coalesce around the philosophy of what juvenile justice can be.

DLR Group Senior Principal Darrell Stelling, AIA, is recognized as a proven design expert in the industry and regularly shares his insights with CN's readership.

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