

Zev Yaroslavsky Family Support Center

Van Nuys, California

Case Study



How does a municipal entity create an environment that facilitates collaboration in order to better serve 1,000+ clients each day? The physical separation of seven Los Angeles County departments housed in different locations inhibited the connectivity desperately needed to fulfill the needs of a population requiring access to human service resources. Bringing these services together in one place would provide easier access for clientele in a central location, improving public service in order to make a deeper impact.



Fulfilling a Vision

Seven departments (Public Social Services, Child and Family Services, Child Support Services, Health Services, Probation, Mental Health, and Public Health) were spread over the region, inhibiting accessibility. Teams within the departments were working in silos, impeding interaction and communication among caseworkers. The vision—bringing staff members among agencies in closer proximity to each other—would foster the kind of knowledge sharing required to create a more holistic view of the County's clients. Also vitally important was the need for a friendly, open, and welcoming place that was safe and secure for individuals and families who use County services, as well as for the service providers. Creating a more "human" space where both clients and staff felt valued was a priority to sustain the morale of both groups.

The County also required a flexible space to accommodate the varying needs of departments with different priorities and to support individuals' need for a variety of ways to work. The new building had to be cost effective as a public service organization funded by taxpayer dollars—and include a plan that supported future growth and change.









Building Partnerships

Named after the former Los Angeles County supervisor who championed the idea of consolidating services in one place, the five-story Zev Yaroslavsky Family Support Center is a 216,000 square foot, state-of-the-art facility on 6.8 acres. It features a pedestrian-friendly, park-like campus setting where art, architecture, and landscape are cohesively integrated. Buildings are located on the perimeter, creating a safe interior courtyard with walking paths, gathering spaces, and a children's play area.

Inside the building are coffee bars, huddle rooms, and lunch areas integrated with an open office layout. Each floor offers secure access to terraces outside. Art installations by local artists express a sense of community and humanity.

The Zev Yaroslavsky Family Support Center was initiated as a design-build project with an integrated team to streamline the process. "We deliberately embraced the design-build model to create a collaborative team with a vision for delivering design excellence and value to Los Angeles County," said Peter Loeb, Project Sponsor at Pankow Builders. "Building partnerships dedicated to the same vision ensures that project's best interests remain a priority."

Throughout the design process, the team remained focused on the clientele who use these critical county services. "The County knew that the environment people are in affects the way they behave, and that people's experiences influence the desired outcome," said Thom Greving, Design Director and Associate Principal at HKS, Inc. "So they wanted to create a place where people would feel welcome and not feel stressed out."

Forward-Thinking and Welcoming—with Room to Grow

An open office layout included workstations with low panels, providing access to views and natural daylight for over 95 percent of the people in the building. The workspace was designed with a mix of collaborative, social, and focused work areas to accommodate a range of workstyles, while still allowing for some privacy and adequate storage. Enclosed offices, conference rooms, and counseling rooms complement lounge areas, cafés, break rooms, and reception stations.

"The staff interacts with the public on a daily basis and security is a big issue," said Silva Zeitlian, Vice President/Director of Design-Interiors at HKS. "There was a debate about whether to keep the glass barriers, but then they decided: 'We're changing the way we work so we need to change our behavior; if we change, our clients can change as well.'"









Environments that provide natural elements and daylight, and address the physical and psychological health of people enhance well-being for people in the workplace. Research proves the space we work in shapes our physical health and behavior, enabling people to be more productive and engaged. Many elements in the Zev Yaroslavsky Family Support Center, such as the courtyard and terraces, give staff a variety of places to enjoy nature during the day. Natural elements are also brought inside through the use of materials and artwork. A mix of furnishings—from ergonomic seating to casual lounge pieces—offer people choice in where to work, empowering them with autonomy.

Several workplace solutions contribute to LEED® Gold certification, including Haworth's raised access flooring. Besides providing the foundation for saving energy costs, it offers flexibility for anticipated workspace changes in the future. Integrated Palette™ products such as Enclose® walls, Compose® systems, Planes® tables, and X Series® storage and casegoods build upon this flexibility as complementary products that coordinate together. The array of products will respond to the County's changing business needs, allowing it to make the most out of its real estate investment.



A One-Stop Shop

The Zev Yaroslavsky Family Support Center is an award winning facility that provides a more humane and collaborative environment for both staff and clients. "People are super excited and feel like they've been taken to another level, challenging the way they operate, and changing the way they deliver care," said Silva Zeitlian from HKS.

"This is bringing all those departments together for the public as a one-stop shop," said Robert Rodriguez, Building Manager for the County of Los Angeles Internal Services Department. And, it remained within the predicted budget and timeframe.

"I believe the project objectives were met, and actually exceeded," said Yuri Petroff, Managing Principal, Interior Office Solutions Los Angeles. "This was a forward-thinking, groundbreaking project for LA County that could be a prototype for other projects on the horizon."



Customer Profile

One of the nation's largest counties, Los Angeles County, California, contains approximately 27 percent of California's population. The County is charged with providing numerous services that affect the lives of all residents, including law enforcement, tax collection, public health protection, public social services, elections and flood control. The Zev Yaroslavsky Family Support Center is the facility where residents can access financial, employment, health and nutrition-related services, and seek assistance for children at risk, as well as adult abuse and domestic violence.

Haworth Product

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