



New courthouse for Long Beach offers new potential for U.S. civic buildings

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Construction is complete on the Governor George Deukmejian Courthouse, the first major civic building in the U.S. delivered through performance-based infrastructure (PBI).

The project has finished under budget and ahead of schedule. The building will be occupied and begin operating this month. A dedication ceremony is scheduled for Nov. 21.

"I believe that the design-build-finance-operate-maintain PBI contract structure provided AECOM with the right tools and incentives to design a court building which is inspiring, more than meets the Superior Court's current needs, will be flexible, and simple to maintain and operate — all better than predicted, faster than predicted, and less expensive than the norm," said Clifford Ham, principal architect for the State of California's Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC).

"We're proud to have played a role in creating this building that serves one community and offers a promising model for so many others," said Bill Hanway, AECOM's executive vice president for Buildings Places, Americas. "This is performance-based design for performance-based infrastructure, which required a uniquely collaborative process and dynamic perspective. The result is a building for the court, for the community, for today, and for tomorrow."

The project

The courthouse will provide for the Superior Court of Los Angeles County's high volume of criminal, traffic, civil, and family judicial proceedings. It will house 31 courtrooms, court administrative space, detention facilities, offices of related county justice agencies, and compatible retail space. A nearby parking structure has been renovated with the project. Surrounding streetscapes have been improved. The building's courtyard has been created to provide a secure interior open space.

The new facility replaces one built in 1959 that suffers from fundamental functional and security flaws, is overcrowded, and fails to meet accessibility requirements.

The PBI arrangement made it possible to deliver a much-needed civic building with design excellence for the long term despite the lack of funds to pay for the project up front. Under the agreement, the state pays nothing until the building is occupied. Upon occupation the state has full ownership of building and site and pays back on an annual basis the project's capital costs as well as annual operating and maintenance expenses over 35 years. Deductions can be made if the facility fails to meet certain performance criteria. Expansion room for six to eight additional courtrooms will be leased to Los Angeles County for the next 15 years, with the State benefiting from the revenue and the private sector carrying full responsibility unless or until the State chooses to occupy it.

The partnership

The AOC selected Long Beach Judicial Partners LLC (LBJP), a project company of Meridiam Infrastructure, to finance, design, build, operate, and maintain the project. LBJP contracted with Clark Design/Build of California, a wholly owned subsidiary of Clark Construction Group, LLC, as the project's design-builder. Clark in turn contracted with AECOM as the courthouse's architect-engineer of record. Clark was assisted on this project by its affiliate, Edgemoor Real Estate Services. LBJP separately engaged Johnson Controls Inc. as its operating service provider. Meridiam Infrastructure raised 100 percent of the financing required to complete the project on behalf of LBJP. Financial advisors included KPMG and BNP Paribas. Fulbright & Jaworski LLP provides legal counsel to Meridiam and LBJP.

The potential

Common for transportation infrastructure in the U.S., and outside the country for many types of public projects, public-private partnerships offer a potential solution for delivering the public buildings for which many U.S. cities face a critical need in a time of severe budget constraints. The experience in Long Beach is enabling the state of California to evaluate the effectiveness and applicability of this delivery model for other projects. Next year, the AOC will report to the state legislature on the project's cost-effectiveness.