

Los Angeles Edition

C A L I F O R N I A CONSTRUCTION REVIEW

California's Most Challenging & Unique New Construction Projects

value engineering
site planning
network sourcebook

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The Jewish Federation Goldsmith Center

Built in 1954 to house The Jewish Federation of Los Angeles, The Jewish Federation Goldsmith Center was the first existing building in Los Angeles to be brought up to the new 1997 Uniform Building Code that followed the 1994 Northridge earthquake.

In the fall of 1994, The Jewish Federation, which owns the building, was forced to temporarily move out of the building in order to repair the extensive earthquake damage.

"The owner debated whether to tear it down, put a band-aid on it or remodel it," said Dan Stafford, project manager for Matt Construction Corporation, the projects general contractor. "Eventually, the owner decided to remodel." The entire exterior was remodeled, and the interior underwent a complete makeover as well. Parking structures located underneath the building were also partially renovated.

The first floor of the center includes

common areas such as boardrooms, an exhibition gallery, an entirely reconfigured and finished children's library, and a 12,000-square-foot children's museum. Offices are located on floors two through 12 for various Jewish organizations.

"The design of this building would not have been possible without the support of the owner. [The Jewish Federation] was particularly supportive in the attempt to essentially create a new building rather than simply fix up the old one, and it shared a vision of what the building could be."

— Larry Schlossberg,
Gruen Associates

"We tried to incorporate symbolic Jewish elements into the building," said Jack Klein, senior executive vice president of operations for The Jewish Federation. For example, the building is 12 stories tall, representing the 12 tribes of Israel. "Jewish buildings were meant to blend in, with no real architectural style, but at the same time we wanted to let the community know this is the Jewish headquarters."

Terrazzo flooring covers the lobby. Jerusalem stone — the same stone used to create the ancient holy city of Jerusalem — appears on the interior lobby walls as well as along the sidewalks in front of the building. A grove of olive trees planted in front of the building represent peace. Atop the building sits a torch, the federations logo, which is brightly lit at night. "Light is a very important metaphor in the Jewish world," said Larry Schlossberg, principal for Gruen Associates, the projects architect.

Congratulations The Jewish Federation Goldsmith Center *for making a difference in our community*

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concept to completion

The Need:

Remodeling a building damaged in the 1994 Northridge earthquake

The Challenge:

Getting permission from the City of Los Angeles to use shotcrete, and meeting a tight construction schedule

office buildings/company headquarters



Photo courtesy of Gruen Associates, Assassi Productions

office buildings/company headquarters

Photo courtesy of Gruen Associates, Assasini Productions

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Photo courtesy of Gruen Associates, Assassi Productions

The most important aspect of lighting in the building is natural light. “The building opens up to floor-to-ceiling glass on most of the perimeter, which floods the building with natural light,” he said. “In the lobby, artificial light highlights certain features in a very precise way. The Jerusalem stone wall is lit from above to highlight the texture of the stone. On the long wall of the lobby, there are mounted wood panels with special lighting to highlight the warmth of the wood.”

The donor recognition wall in the lobby consists of glass panels with donors’ names etched into them. These panels are lit with fiber optics, highlighting the donors’ names.

Major work on the exterior of the building was needed to repair the structure. “We

came up with a scheme to build a new structural frame on the outside of the building,”

“Structurally, a big challenge was the issue of shotcrete. It was not allowed by the City of Los Angeles. We had to go through structural test panels to convince the city it was a viable option.”

— Dan Stafford,
Matt Construction Corporation

Stafford said. “It required new beams and panels that replaced the original walls.”

Schlossberg said the need for new concrete wall frames on the exterior also necessitated reskinning the building. “The

frames were added by framing and carving to create a new, dynamic masking for the building,” he said. “The existing concrete walls were removed to open up the office areas to glass. In the past, the occupants were accustomed to a building that was somewhat dark. Like the frame, the new skin was sculpted. It consists of [azure-colored] laminated and insulated glass and painted aluminum panels.”

The curtain wall of the building is composed of laminated glass, said Schlossberg. “The purpose is twofold — for security purposes and acoustics.” The building is located on a busy street, and the curtain wall keeps out much of the traffic noise, he added.

“Structurally, a big challenge was the issue of shotcrete,” Stafford said. “It was

office buildings/company headquarters

Photo courtesy of Gruen Associates, Assarisi Productions



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not allowed by the City of Los Angeles. We had to go through structural test panels to convince the city it was a viable option. It is a system not normally used in this application — normally you would use concrete."

A shooting at another Jewish facility a few months into the project prompted the owner to demand high security in this building. The security gates are the same as at an embassy, Klein said. On the first level, windows were eliminated in favor of reinforced concrete, and elsewhere windows are thick, insulated glass.

Another challenge was the schedule, Stafford said. "In 14 months we remodeled the building structurally — all the mechanical and electrical systems plus the

entire tenant improvement." Using the shotcrete helped the team shave time off the schedule. "It's much faster to install," Stafford said, "so we picked up approximately three months."

"A project of this magnitude usually takes three to four years, and we had to have it done in two because the lease was up in our temporary building," said Cyndie Ayala, director of administrative services for The Jewish Federation. "What made the actual construction process difficult is that we did the core and shell at the same time."

"If we hadn't had a good relationship with everyone, [the project] would never have gotten done," said Stafford. "We have a long-standing relationship with

Gruen Associates. We've been working with the firm for years, which really helped.

"We had a great relationship with the owner," he added. "The Jewish Federation knew the up in security would hinder the schedule, but we all knew it had to be done so we worked together to ensure it got done."

"The design of this building would not have been possible without the support of the owner," Schlossberg agreed. "[The Jewish Federation] was particularly supportive in the attempt to essentially create a new building rather than simply fix up the old one, and it shared a vision of what the building could be."

Schlossberg said his firm's relationship with Matt Construction Corporation was exceptional as well. "The contractor was very good to work with and was flexible enough to accommodate the issues that always come up in renovation. The firm helped solve these problems in a collaborative way."

Those at the facility were pleased with the end result. "Our goal was to design a class A office building, and we accomplished that," Klein said. ●

— J.P.

facts & figures

Name:

The Jewish Federation
Goldsmith Center

Location:

Los Angeles

Owner:

The Jewish Federation

Type of Project:

Remodel of an existing office building

Architect:

Gruen Associates, Los Angeles

General Contractor:

Matt Construction Corporation

Size:

132,000 square feet

Cost:

\$24 million

Construction Time:

January 1998 - September 2000