2000 Award Winners

Design Awards

U.S. General Services Administration
2000 was a milestone for the GSA Design Awards—the 10th anniversary of the program, and the first time projects initiated under the Design Excellence Program received awards.

In 1990, the Design Awards Program, which had been dormant for more than a decade, was re instituted on a biennial basis. The first jury, chaired by architect Hugh Hardy, gave 18 awards. The awards were given primarily for historic preservation projects. In 1992, a jury chaired by architect Eugene Kohn gave ten awards. Again, historic preservation dominated. And in 1994, a jury chaired by architect Michael Graves gave 14 awards. Seven were for historic preservation. Only one new project—a border station—and two projects “on the boards” were honored in architecture. The message was clear: GSA knew how to preserve its historic Federal buildings, but it was not adding to its architectural legacy with contemporary commissions of similarly high quality.

After consulting with distinguished members of the design professions, the Design Excellence Program was initiated. The program had a straightforward objective: to hire the best designers in the nation and secure top-quality design. To do this, GSA (1) streamlined the process for selecting architect/engineering teams, focusing on design talent and expanding the opportunities for firms to apply for commissions, and (2) established the National Register of Peer Professionals—distinguished private-sector architects, engineers, designers, public arts administrators, design educators, and critics from across the nation—to help select designers and review design concepts for GSA projects. Over the last six years, under the Design Excellence Program, GSA has engaged some of the most talented and creative designers working in America. Now, the results are coming in.

In 2000, the Design Awards jury, chaired by architect Charles Gwathmey, had the first opportunity to evaluate Design Excellence projects. The group recommended
18 projects. Three of the seven Honor Awards are for new buildings and four
Citations are for new or “on the boards” architectural projects. Interestingly, for
the first time in ten years, there were no historic preservation building awards.

The Honor Awards in architecture are for new courthouses in Las Vegas, Phoenix,
and Central Idaho, New York. The buildings are clearly worthy additions to our
architectural legacy and models for Federal buildings in the 21st century. They
embody the spirit of the 1962 Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture—reflecting
the dignity, enterprise, vigor, and stability of the Federal Government while
emphasizing the finest contemporary American architectural thought.

The awards this year also illustrate GSA’s success in other important areas. The two
awards in the engineering/technology/energy category demonstrate the agency’s
commitment to energy conservation. They are good examples of conservation using
current, readily available technology with minimal capital investment. The David
Skagg Federal Building in Boulder, Colorado, is the first new GSA building in the
Rocky Mountain Region to incorporate the mandatory Federal Energy Efficiency
Requirements. This project also implements Executive Order 12739, which encour-
ages participation in utility-sponsored programs to fund strategies for energy
consumption.

Security remains a major area of concern. GSA is committed to providing appropriate
security for Federal employees and those who use Government facilities. At the same
time, GSA must balance this with the need for openness and accessibility. Federal
buildings must not become fortresses. The redesigned plaza at the 1960s Phillip
Burton Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse successfully meets the seemingly
contradictory need for security at the same time that it provides an inviting open
space for the public.

Art has always been an important element in Federal architecture. Under GSA’s
Art-in-Architecture Program, more than 200 works of art have been commissioned.
GSA is pleased to honor two new works with awards: “Jurisprudens” at the Melvin
Price U.S. Courthouse in East St. Louis, Illinois, honors the importance of the jury
in the American judicial system “Ums of Justice,” which grace the new Federal court-
house in Lafayette, Louisiana, integrates images of justice bifurcated with the tradi-
tion of monumental urns as ornament for civic buildings. The two graphic design
awards are lively print pieces illustrating art commissions for the IRS Computing Center
in Martinsburg, West Virginia, and the U.S. Courthouse in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Finally, this round includes three awards in a new category: Construction Excellence.
Construction Excellence goes hand-in-hand with Design Excellence. This program
applies specific procedures and practices to GSA’s capital projects with the purpose
of delivering the highest quality construction for the best value, using best business
practices.

The Construction Excellence awards category places high importance on measurable
results: how well specific construction procedures and practices have been applied;
reduction in change orders, claims and litigation, design deficiencies, and overall
construction costs; completion of projects on time and within budget; and improved
design quality. The new U.S. courthouses in Kansas City, Missouri, and Fort Myers,
Florida, and the new U.S. Port of Entry in Blaine, Washington, were deemed out-
standing examples of Construction Excellence.

GSA congratulates the award recipients and thanks everyone who submitted an
entry. Their creative work and dedication have given GSA in the forefront of public
design—giving new meaning and importance to the civic realm in American life in the
21st century.
Honor Awards

Architecture
William J. Neal Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse
Scranton, Pennsylvania

On the Boards
U.S. Courthouse
Richmond, Virginia

On the Boards
U.S. Post of Duty
North Dakota Air Guard, Bismarck, North Dakota

Landscaping Architecture/Design
Paul N. Norton Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse
Boise, Idaho

Engineering/Technology/Energy
Sweet Home Federal Building
Sweet Home, Oregon

Preservation/Conservation
Restoration of Peter G. Schultz’s
“Tidebreakers”, Seattle, Washington

Art
Lines of Justice
Los Angeles, California

Graphic Design
Print Materials for Dedication of “Roberts”
Brookfield, Wisconsin

IHS Contracting Center
St. Louis, Missouri

Construction Excellence
U.S. Courthouse
Fort Myers, Florida

Citations

Architecture
Sandra Day O’Connor U.S. Courthouse
Phoenix, Arizona

Lloyd D. George U.S. Courthouse
Las Vegas, Nevada

U.S. Courthouse and Federal Buildings
Central Gulf, New York

Engineering/Technology/Energy
U.S. Geological Survey, Coleman Replacement
Easter, Wyoming

Art
John Deere
East St. Louis, Illinois

Construction Excellence
Charles Evans Whitaker U.S. Courthouse
Kansas City, Missouri

U.S. Post Office and Courthouse
Blaine, Washington

U.S. Post Office and Courthouse
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Landscaping Architecture/Design
Phillip Burton Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse
San Francisco, California

Engineering/Technology/Energy
Northwest Federal Building
Denver, Colorado

Preservation/Conservation
Restoration of George Segal’s “The Restaurant”,
Rochester, New York

2000 Honor Awards

Design Awards
The new U.S. courthouse in Phoenix is a great civic hall. The main public space is an awesome 350 feet long by 150 feet wide with a sky-lit roof supported 120 feet above the ground level on 12 giant columns. The six-story building and raised plaza fill a two-block site in central Phoenix between the governmental and business districts.

To the east of the atrium, a plaza landscaped with shade trees, pools, and fountains is a public open space and transition zone between the harsh desert climate and the grand entry space.

In an exemplary combination of innovative engineering and design, the atrium is cooled by evaporation and convection. Outside air is pulled in at the top of the atrium just below the roof where it is misted. As the moisture is absorbed, the air cools and descends to the atrium floor. On hot summer days, this results in a temperature 20 degrees cooler on the main level of the atrium than the outside.

Two of the atrium walls are glass, permitting views into the space and out to the city. Opposite the long glass façade, six courthouse floors contain 17 courtrooms along broad gallery corridors that are like streets overlooking a large square. A glass-enclosed elevator tower with balconies just inside the atrium defines the vertical circulation.

The centerpiece of the atrium space is the Special Proceedings Courtroom—a two-story glass cylinder elevated on a platform. A broad staircase becomes a procession to this upper level. Inside the cylinder, a suspended, convex glass "lens" ceiling is an oculus to the sky above and a means of directing and diffusing the light throughout the ceremonial courtroom.

Credits
Richard Meier
Richard Meier & Partners, Architects
Michael Schneider
Langdon Wilcox Architects
Pacific Rim Region
Public Buildings Service
U.S. General Services Administration

HONOR AWARD
ARCHITECTURE

In The Tradition of Place Making, Inspirational Spaces, and Memorable Architectural Experiences, This Building is Exemplary. It is a Visionary Civic Achievement That Engenders Both Wonder and Respect.
— Jay Keneally

Sandra Day O’Connor U.S. Courthouse
Phoenix, Arizona
Lloyd D. George U.S. Courthouse
Las Vegas, Nevada

Honor Award
Architecture

The Lloyd D. George U.S. Courthouse is about creating an open, inviting urban place. The architecture embodies the dignity of traditional civic buildings and is a model of urban design excellence at the same time that its design is boldly contemporary.

The eight-story L-shaped building sits on a six-acre parcel of land in downtown Las Vegas. Its prominent feature is an expansive plaza. The public space is elevated above the street level and shaded from the desert sun by an enormous trestle-canopy cantilevered from the roof. To give this dramatic design the sense of permanence and stability appropriate to a courthouse, a single gigantic column—rising 173 feet—anchors the canopy to the open corner of the plaza.

A three-story freestanding limestone and white marble cylinder at the intersection of the "L" marks the main public entrance. Access is through a one-story pavilion—a security checkpoint clad in marble and translucent glass. This compact space is a transition to the cylinder rotunda, which is flooded with light from a cable-supported, clear glass dome. The courts and other functions are in the main structure beyond the rotunda. The front of the building is a seven-story curtain wall with spacious public galleries overlooking the plaza and the downtown skyline. Ten courtrooms are located along the public galleries. The judge’s chambers and other administrative offices are behind the courtrooms along the back perimeter of the building.

A unique feature is the jury assembly space—a separate, prominent, plaza-level structure at the end of the long-arm of the "L." This space has a tall sloping roof and a clerestory that fills the room with light. A secure courtyard gives jurors the opportunity to step outside for fresh air.

Materials—limestone, marble, granite, glass, and aluminum—reflect permanence appropriate to the court. And the building colors—sand, beige, and gray—complement the hues of the desert mountains around Las Vegas.

It is surprising to find such urbanity and such elegant restraint in Las Vegas. The giant articulated column is a powerful totem that will no doubt become the courthouse’s signature in a city of icons and symbols.

— Judy Content

Credits
Material Wards
Community
Henry Campbell
HCA Architects
Jericco Rim Region
Public Buildings Service
U.S. General Services Administration
This building sets a new standard of excellence in Federal architecture, reinterpreting the traditional American courthouse design for the 21st century. The familiar classical courthouse with heavy stone walls and grand columns is transformed into a civic edifice that is light and transparent—a structure that exemplifies the openness and accessibility to justice in our diverse democratic society.

Located in Central Islip, Long Island, New York, the courthouse takes advantage of panoramic views over both the Great South Bay and the Atlantic Ocean. The elegant, 12-story white rectangle and rotunda is placed on a podium to accentuate its presence on an otherwise flat and undifferentiated landscape. As a result, it dominates the skyline, giving the building a monumental presence. Visitors ascend wide tiers of steps to a broad plaza that is more than 600 feet long and 150 feet wide. The focus of the plaza is the building entrance—a four-story portal cut into a soaring 180-foot-high rotunda.

The rotunda, which is in the form of a cone, is clad in white metal panels. An oculus at the top allows light to flood the space and creates moving patterns of light and shade throughout the day. Beyond the rotunda, visitors enter a full-height skylit atrium that divides the 17 District and Magistrate courtrooms on the west side from the five Bankruptcy courtrooms on the east. The atrium is a soaring public space where public events can be held. There, an open staircase leads to a large balcony that provides access to the Special Proceedings Courtroom. This room is a freestanding cube set behind the rectangular courthouse block.

A granite-clad wall runs east-west for the entire length of the building and visually separates the public circulation galleries on one side from the courtrooms on the other side. Marking the edge of the public galleries, a south-facing curtain wall offers uninterrupted views to the ocean. In contrast, the north facade is a solid plane, the private edge of the building highlighted with a rhythmic pattern of strip windows to articulate offices and judges’ chambers.

This courthouse was the visual intelligence of the finest contemporary architecture; yet it enshrines the genetic code of significant historical buildings. The light-filled, grand public spaces of the interior openly welcome you to a place where important human matters are deliberated.

— Jay Ceman
To appreciate the significance of this project, it is essential to explain that the norm for dealing with obsolete mechanical systems—such as those used for air conditioning and heating—is to simply call for replacement of that equipment. The way feasibility studies are done also makes it easy to justify this strategy. In this context, however, taking into consideration the enormous capacity of the equipment at the John W. Powell Federal Building in Reston, Virginia, the replacement of four aging air conditioning chillers is a surprising decision and an extraordinary achievement.

In this project, the engineers obtained and studied operating logs and records for the past five years to establish and compute the actual operating characteristics of the equipment with original design parameters. Energy usage, variations in equipment usage, and climate conditions were measured and cross-checked to determine patterns of demand. After extensive analyses, the engineers recommended that it was in the best interest of the General Services Administration and U.S. Geological Survey, the building’s tenants, to replace the existing chillers and the internal moving parts of the pumps. This strategy would result in substantial cost savings and could extend the life of the pumps by at least ten years. In addition, this approach permitted GSA and USGS to implement additional efficiencies and improvements.

To the professionals and the owners are commended, firstly, for their willingness to question the need for replacement and, secondly and more nobly, to go about answering the question in a thoroughly unbiased and rigorously manner. This award is as much for the integrity of the parties as it is for the ingenuity of the solution.

Joy Curnow
Installed in the new Melvin Price U.S. Courthouse in East St. Louis, Illinois, this work honors the importance of the jury in the American judicial system. Using traditional methods, the artists sculpted 12 life-size portraits of ordinary American citizens representing the 12 members of a jury. The heads—each with its own unique details and expression—were then laser-scanned, rapid-prototyped at small scale, cast in bronze in large quantities, finished with a hand-rubbed patina, and precisely affixed to hundreds of suspended cables.

Collectively, more than 3,000 small sculptures coalesce into two monumental heads facing each other across the skylit courthouse atrium. In creating an abstract representation of implied dialogue, this artwork honors a legal system rooted in the voice of the people. Like our perception of legal justice, our perception of the two large portraits can gain clarity over time and from a distance.

Credits
Ralph Helmick
Stuart Schacter
Helmick & Schacter Sculpture
Great Lakes Region
Public Buildings Service
U.S. General Services Administration
2000 Citations

Design Awards

J U R Y

Charles Gwathmey (Chair)
New York, New York
Architecture

David Driskell
Hyattsville, Maryland
Art

Julie Eizenberg
Santa Monica, California
Architecture

Debra Lerman-Bronich
Washington, District of Columbia
Architecture & Interior Design

Guy Nordenson
New York, New York
Engineering

Kiku Oba
St. Louis, Missouri
Graphic Design

Michael Rotondi
Los Angeles, California
Architecture

U.S. General Services Administration

U.S. General Services Administration
This project is notable for its success in bringing together a typical neo-classical Federal building of the 1930s and a new addition so they work functionally and symbolically in a single unified courthouse. The design endows the existing and new buildings with their own identities, reflecting a strong concern both for history and for making public buildings appropriate to our times. The distinctive new building is equal in architectural and urban presence to its restored neo-classical partner. While avoiding historic symbolism or stylistic reference to the existing building's neo-classical ornament, the new building is careful to respect the older building's materials, proportions, and scale.

A major public space unites the two buildings. Siting side-by-side, the two masonry structures define a covered courtyard celebrating the judiciary's special role in American society and creating a new civic place in the heart of Scranton’s historic downtown. The courtyard is covered with a glazed roof. In the courtyard, four light, beautifully detailed steel bridges connect the structures, allowing public, private, and secured circulation systems to seamlessly serve the entire complex.

At the level of urban design, the complex is thoughtfully integrated with the Scranton cityscape. The two buildings are on Courthouse Square facing the Romanesque-styled Lackawanna County Courthouse. The new entry opens to the squares directly across from the county courthouse entrance. The four-story curtain wall and skylit courtyard is a pleasing counterpart to the soaring masonry tower of the county courthouse.

This new four-story, 280,000-square-foot courthouse will occupy a 6.9-acre urban site and become the centerpiece for the reformation of downtown Hammond, Indiana. The restrained design is composed of two monolithic limestone-clad wings joined by a three-story, glass-veiled atrium with a vaulted ceiling. To articulate the form and bring natural light to upper level interior spaces, wedge shapes have been cut out of the building’s corners. Enhancing its civic presence, the courthouse is set back from the main public thoroughfare and is graced with a path that gently ascends to the courthouse entrance. Four broad steps and a glazed canopy are the threshold to a vestibule and central hall. The public hall is both the symbolic and functional focus of the courthouse. Generous in its dimensions, 100 feet long, 43 feet wide, and 64 feet high, it is filled with light that flows through the glass walls to the east and west. To the north and south, limestone walls define public galleries and announce the presence of seven courtrooms. The durable materials, chunk details, and vaulting evoke a sense of stability, calm, and dignity to the building.

Plants call for a large terrace at the back of the building with generous plantings and a pergola. The terrace will physically extend the public space beyond the hall to the outside.
A restricted site and dual circulation patterns shaped the design and form of the new Sault Sainte Marie, Michigan, post of entry. The steep 3.2-acre site is landlocked by state facilities to the south, a bridge to the north, a local street to the west, and an interstate highway to the east. After accommodating five inspection lanes, the remaining land mandated a building design that was long and narrow.

Coming from Canada, commercial traffic goes to a lower place on the steep side of the site, and non-commercial vehicles go to an upper plaza. The vertical and horizontal separation distances the truck noise and exhaust from car lanes. It also lowers trucks so they do not block observation of the non-commercial booths.

The most visually important and innovative design element is the canopy. This translucent, airplane wing-shaped feature becomes a luminous gateway to the United States while dispersing exhaust fumes and noise away from the inspection booths.

The building will use a number of sustainability and energy conservation strategies: high-performance glazing, occupancy sensors, and light shelves to bring in reflected light. A vegetated roof will minimize storm water runoff, increase thermal performance, and extend the life of the roof.
The Phillip Burton Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse is a severe, classically modern building designed by John Carl Warnecke in 1980. The original plaza contained two series of stairs leading to a grand portico framed by two enormous fountains. In the 1980s the fountains were shut off, and later the area was fenced as a safety measure. Clearly, it was time to redesign the plaza—for aesthetics reasons, to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and to meet new security standards established after the bombing in Oklahoma City.

The designers—winners of an open, international design competition co-sponsored by GSA and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art—were charged to find solutions that addressed disparate, often contradictory, elements: to create a space that would be both open yet secure, grand yet sheltered, monumental yet inviting.

Their solution was to create a large plaza—45,000 square feet—that shifts and folds along the main facade from the low end to the high end of the site. Along these bends and turns are seating areas, planting spaces, ramps, light fixtures, drainage elements, and secure barriers. Seating elements are designed both individually and as benches. They are made of stainless steel and taun—an eco-friendly hematite. Planting areas incorporate wild grass, local flowers, and many new trees—both deciduous Sycamore and coniferous New Zealand Christmas. In terms of materials, to keep within the tight $2.7 million budget, the plaza is a combination of precast-in-place concrete and shortcrete, which is sand-blasted to soften the surface and lighten the color.

Phillip Burton Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse Plaza
San Francisco, California

David Skaggs Federal Building
Boulder, Colorado
This was a unique preservation project. Taking advantage of 20 years of technological advances, it was an opportunity to revisit a work of art by a major American artist with the goal of restoring and realizing the original vision for that piece.

In 1976, “The Restaurant” by artist George Segal was installed on an exterior promenade of the Dulles Federal Building in Buffalo, New York. The sculpture depicts a restaurant street scene and is composed of three cast bronze figures. Two figures are standing outside the restaurant. The third figure is inside the restaurant seated on a chair lashing on a table, a composition framed by a brick structure with roof lintel and ionian window.

In less than 20 years, the sculpture was severely damaged by atmospheric and gaseous corrosion. Responding to this situation, the artist and the conservator developed a program that not only corrected the problems but also used new coating technology to re-present the piece as it was originally conceived. The matte white figures, which look like the plaster originals, and black furniture are now the color and texture that the artist desired them to be in 1976, a feat not possible 25 years ago because of the lack of appropriately-durable finishes.

The artist was able to combine “the bland eyes of justice” and the architectural urn into a new scale and abstract sensibility that transcend both tradition and sculpture as it becomes an iconic, compelling, and noble presence. They are simultaneously literal and surreal, which engenders a unique credibility.

Credits

Dave Warner
Johnson Artists
Fine Arts Program
Public Buildings Service
U.S. General Services Administration

Urn of Justice
Lafayette, Louisiana

Twin Urns of Justice stand as a sentinal presence to either side of the entrance of the new U.S. Courthouse in Lafayette, Louisiana. They integrate two design traditions into unique pieces of public art: (1) the use of the image of Justice blindfolded in courthouses, and (2) the use of vessels as architectural ornamentation in classical buildings.

The urns—each approximately six feet high—sit at the front end of the monumental pilasters that flank the entrance stairs. They face outward, reaching out and grasping all approaching visitors. Their scale, neither diminutive nor domineering, offers a transition from human to architectural scale.

The striped blindfold and star motif around the face of each urn is symbolic of the American flag. The striped fabric also recalls the region’s earliest hand loomed fabrics while the star is used throughout the interior of the courthouse. The repetition of the stripes creates a visual rhythm that moves the eye around the form in a measured pattern, much like the fluting of a column. The gender and age of the faces are intentionally ambiguous, a reference to the inclusion of all people.

Credits

Diana K. Niemi
Artist
Greater Southwest Region
Public Buildings Service
U.S. General Services Administration

U.S. General Services Administration
In the fall of 1999, "Rockman" by sculptor Tom Otterness was installed on the plaza of the U.S. Courthouse in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Commissioned through GSA’s Art-in-Architecture Program, the sculpture comprises seven demented: a bird, tortoise, snake, frog, and various human-like figures placed around a central “Rockman” figure.

It is always a challenge to celebrate art and design in two-dimensional media. In this case, different components of the sculpture were featured on various print materials and banners for the dedication ceremony. The graphic design of the invitation, postcards, program, banners, and brochure is simple and consistent, allowing the playful personalities of each sculpture to stand out. Bronze metallic ink was used to simulate the material of the art pieces.

This eight-page, 8” x 8” brochure was created to promote the commissioned works of three artists for the Internal Revenue Service Computing Center in Martinsburg, West Virginia.

The design and typography of the brochure are based on the idea of computation and the numeric associations and symbols used in mathematics. The cover works with the concept of data mining—filtering through an ocean of information to find specific data, in this case the works of art. The typographical treatment of the artist’s names on the cover also serves as a visual metaphor of a simple mathematical equation. The primary font used throughout the piece is Trade Gothic, selected for its generic and raw quality.

In the layout for each work, a major concept that inspired the artist’s work is highlighted with a black bar and reverse type to capture the attention of readers and spur them to study the entire text and work of art in more detail. Beautiful and fresh looking photographs are used throughout.
CRITERIA

Projects were judged in terms of:

- Success in meeting GSA project objectives and requirements
- Consistency with GSA environmental goals and policies
- Aesthetic sensibility
- Originality
- Innovation in devising solutions or meeting specific needs
- Technical and functional proficiency
- Cost efficiency on a life-cycle basis
- Extent to which the project can serve as a model for others
The Charles Evans Whitaker U.S. Courthouse is a landmark overlooking the Missouri River in Kansas City, Missouri. Located at the head of the city’s new Blue W. Davis Civic Mall, the 12-story, crescent-shaped building is a visual anchor to the Mall.

The circular shape of the building posed inherent challenges in construction. While there is a certain external symmetry, no two views of the building are exactly alike. Further complicating construction, the building footprint becomes larger as the building rises, and there is no single center radius point off of which to take measurements. The building had to calculate abstract points of reference using hand-held computers. This building was also constructed on metric dimensions—one of the first Federal projects to do so and the first in the Kansas City metropolitan area.

The building has a cast-in-place concrete structure with radially cut precast concrete panels on the exterior skin. Of the 2,400 pieces of precast, only 30 were the same. In addition, exterior granite and limestone were cut to fit in place. All the granite was dressed with radial rather than perpendicular edges, sometimes with both convex and concave contours on the same piece. To do this work required many templates, outstanding craftsmanship, and close attention to detail.

Partnering helped every one becomes familiar with each other’s skills, responsibilities, and needs. This understanding developed a trust that helped overcome many obstacles that came up during construction. A Project Executive Committee composed of top-level managers of the contractor, architect, and GSA was established to ensure the project would stay on track. When issues could not be handled at the lowest working level, they were addressed swiftly by the committee. Despite significant changes to the project scope, the contractor was able to minimize the impact of change orders through early identification of problems. As a result, problems were resolved without significant additional cost, the construction schedule was maintained, and a high quality building was delivered with only one minor claim.
The U.S. Port of Entry on the Pacific Highway in Blaine, Washington, is the busiest commercial land port west of Detroit. The existing facilities were inadequate and needed to be replaced. The project included demolition of two buildings totaling 36,000 square feet and construction of three buildings and auxiliary structures totaling 108,400 square feet. Replacement of the old facilities had to be phased to allow continuous, uninterrupted operation 24 hours a day over the 27-month construction period.

At the outset, project goals were defined and subscribed to by all the team members—GSA, client agencies, design team, contractor, and subcontractors. These goals included: meeting customer needs for a safe and efficient work environment, avoiding lost time due to injuries and security breaches, constructing a quality facility, meeting or beating the schedule, avoiding claims, and completing the project under budget.

GSA took the first step toward achieving the project goals by selecting the construction contractor based on the “Best Value” method of project delivery. This process allowed GSA to go beyond price to consider contractors’ past performance, proposed key team members’ qualifications, and project specific management plans.

While no formal partnering sessions were conducted, monthly meetings were held to give every key project participant access to the entire team. As the basis for an ongoing commitment to quality, the contractor examined every portion of the work for constructability and function yielding numerous value engineering recommendations.

The schedule was critical to the success of the other project goals. To meet these goals, a scheduling consultant was hired, facilitating completion 85 days ahead of the contract period. In addition to this achievement, no time was lost due to construction accidents. There were no security breaches, no claims, and the project was completed under budget. Perhaps most significant, customer satisfaction is extremely high, and the design intent is fulfilled with a high quality facility.
Located on 1.5 acres in the downtown historic district, the 160,000 square foot, six-story U.S. Courthouse in Fort Myers, Florida, is a state-of-the-art facility containing a highly advanced security system and sophisticated fiber optics and teleconferencing capabilities. The building draws its design inspiration from South Florida’s Art Deco and Moderna buildings. The main entrance resembles an abstracted version of a Miami Beach hotel.

Initially, this project was a traditional design and build, but when construction bids were $9 million over appropriations, GSA decided to use an alternative delivery method: Construction Manager as Constructor (CMC), making this the first Construction Management at Risk project for GSA.

Working with the design team, the CMC arrived at a number of value engineering options including changing the structure to a combination precast and poured-in-place system. This reduced labor costs and accelerated the schedule.

Strong communication—the result of partnering sessions—led to other recommendations and actions by the team that resulted in substantial savings, primarily in the structural system, without negative impact on the design. These savings were put back into the project to enhance the quality of the design. For example, an outdoor air preconditioner was added to ensure the best indoor air quality. Other funds were spent on upgrading the lobby floor and enhancing the design of the courtroom entries. The overall result is a project completed two weeks ahead of schedule, within budget, and without litigation or claims.