
ESCONDIDO CIVIC CENTER



CIVIC CENTER PLAZA

ESCONDIDO, CALIFORNIA

THE CIVIC CENTER

As far back as 1971 the City knew it needed to replace its small and aging City Hall. The community disagreed for over a decade on the new city hall's location. The community came to agreement in 1981 that the new City Hall's location needed to be in downtown to center the community. The hope was to build a new, functional City Hall with, perhaps, some meeting space that could be available for the public. The City Council was, however, very concerned about what the public felt was needed in a new Civic Center. They directed an intensive study with hundreds of hours of public meetings and surveys. The effort also included an economic study for each of the proposed ideas. The end result was a civic center with much more than a city hall with some meeting space.

The new civic / cultural center is to include several cultural and community facilities in addition to the city hall. These facilities include: a 1,500-seat, state-of-the-art performing arts theatre for symphony, musical theatre, dance, headline acts, opera; a 450-seat community theatre for community dance play groups, chamber music, high schools and colleges, lecture series and experimental theatre; a 25,000 square foot fine arts museum for local collections, traveling exhibits, art classes and hands-on arts programs; a 16,000 square foot, flexible space conference center for conferences, meetings, banquets and charity balls; a regional government facility that will be able to house school district offices; County offices; State and Federal offices, and offices of State, Federal and County elected officials; and space for the City's future needs. The Civic Center will serve the cultural and government needs for the entire northern half of San Diego County.

The Civic Center has an estimated cost of approximately \$80 million and is fully funded through redevelopment financing. The balance of the project is under design and will start construction in early 1990. The center should be open in late 1992. The City is now also looking at what other cultural and recreational facilities may be desired. The residual social and economic benefits of cultural and recreational programs can be enormous. Things like the increased restaurant trade from having 2,000 people attending cultural events can be astronomical. The improved property tax and sales tax to the City can be substantial. The impact of the architecture on improving architecture throughout the community is tremendous. The opportunities are almost unlimited, and the benefits to the community from having such activities are absolutely exciting.

ESCONDIDO CULTURAL CENTER



A-CITY HALL

D-ARTS CENTER

G-CITY HALL EXPANSION

B-LYRIC THEATER

E-MEETING CENTER

H-COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

C-COMMUNITY THEATER

F-PARKING GARAGE

J-PARKING (FUTURE DEVELOPMENT)

THE DESIGN

The community was wholly committed to developing a Civic Center of superior design. The only question was, what did that look like? The Council chose to use a design competition to select the design. In keeping with their policy of an open public process, a nation-wide competition was pursued. The competition was in two phases. In the first phase, the entrants submitted two drawings of their ideas and their submittals were kept anonymous. Five finalists were selected for the second phase and their identity was revealed at that time.

The competition was held in a huge tent on the City Hall site and was open to the public. There were 108 submittals in the first phase. The public was invited to review the submittals and make written comments. Over 1500 citizens reviewed the drawings. The comments were given to the jury and were required to be a major part of their consideration. The five finalists were provided with copies of public comments and an extensive briefing on the jury's comments. From this process, the five finalists were allowed to revise and improve their submittals. The firm of Pacific Associates Planners Architects was selected as the winner. As a bit of irony for an anonymous competition, the winners happen to be a San Diego firm.

The City Hall final design also involved extensive input. The City staff was heavily involved in the final design. Every single employee in the City was interviewed at least twice by the architects. Numerous staff committees were involved throughout the process. As a result, the building is not only beautiful, but is extremely functional. It is perhaps one of the most sophisticated city halls in America. This can be attributed to asking the people who work in the building, what they need. There was also extensive public review of the building at every phase of design. Because it became the citizens' City Hall and not the city's, the public has supported every aspect of the building. This includes the extensive use of granite, mahogany, gold, high quality furniture and all the many high quality materials that were used. It's hard to spend \$15.7 million on any public building and get virtually no complaints.

Public participation and support is critical to the success of any great public undertaking. The kind of public involvement used on the City Hall will be used throughout the Civic Center. This will maintain excitement and support for the Civic Center and other activities the City pursues. Active participation builds public trust and commitment.

THE ARCHITECTURE

The Escondido Civic Center has captured a sense of art as much as architecture. The warm, traditional Mediterranean exterior is familiar, understandable and timeless. The harmonious forms, the rhythm of the columns, and the lattice add a quality of elegance. The lines are clean, simple and strong, yet the building is soft and sensitive with an intricate texture and detail allowing the subtle play of light on the building's many facets. The building is familiar to the region, but escapes the common definition of Southern California architecture. It creates a design with its own strength and identity, yet is comfortable and compatible with the community.

The building has accomplished uniqueness by using different but subtle architectural styles as you transition from the plaza to the interior. The interior captures a graceful and elegant setting in its use of 1920's art deco. This permits a flavor of formality in the business setting and yet keeps it open and human. The candid use of glass and careful placement of space achieves the integration of the exterior and interior. The use of systems furniture provides an economy of space and maintains openness in the building's interior.

The Center reaches out to the entire community with anticipation of the future and an appreciation of the past. It embraces the heart of our community and provides the bridge to historic Grape Day Park. The building centers on the assets of the park and focuses on establishing a warm, friendly people place. Intimate courtyards, large trees and lawns, the reflection pool and fountain, and cool walkways all provide places for pleasant walks, quiet lunches and friendly gatherings. The vitality and spirit of the Center provides a storehouse of pleasant and memorable experiences for citizens and visitors.

THE TECHNOLOGY

The City Hall is a state-of-the-art building with many carefully thought out and unique features that separate it from most buildings. The key special features are:

1. **Public Convenience:** The design provides for a single expanse public counter on the ground floor. Along this counter are located all of the high volume public use operations. These include, planning, building, engineering, community services, utilities and cashier. This allows people to get in and out quickly and reduces the confusion of trying to find these departments. It also allows the departments to coordinate activities like permit approvals. The counter for each department contains a complete video projection system eliminating the need for cumbersome maps.
2. **Work Space:** To make the open office system truly desirable and functional, special ceiling acoustics were installed, all office panels are acoustical, the lighting has parabolic lenses to reduce glare and a noise masking system was installed to reduce noise from adjoining offices and activities.
3. **Technical Facilities:** Every office has been equipped with data lines, computer terminals, computer aided telephones. Meeting rooms and private offices contain, in addition to these facilities, Cable TV, satellite lines, closed circuit TV and an audio system to the Council Chambers.
4. **Audio-Visual:** The Council Chambers is equipped with TV monitors on the dias and a screen for the audience. From these screens, the system will automatically display slides, video, closed circuit TV, cable TV, satellite, overhead projection by a television camera and remote TV broadcast. The system also ties directly into the City's computer system. There is a slide machine so slides can be made in 60 seconds to show on the system. The overhead projection uses regular paper, thus expensive transparencies are not needed. This system allows much greater flexibility.
5. **Interior Environment:** To enhance the aesthetics and comfort of the building, there has been extensive use of silk plants. A major budget has been established for purchased and commissioned art in the building. Special architectural lighting is provided. Custom designed graphics and signing has been used for aesthetics, but more importantly to make it easy for the public to find their way around the building.

These sophistications are to be embedded throughout the entire Civic & Cultural Center, creating the most advanced forward thinking facilities anywhere.

THE CITY HALL

In addition to the positive, emotional qualities of the architecture, the building responds to many important planning and design criteria. The building represents innovative, functional, state-of-the-art, cost-effective solutions to many specific City needs. The following is a summary of the key features of the building:

1. The building has a gross floor area of 108,000 sq. ft.
2. The building houses thirteen City operations: The City Council, City Clerk, City Treasurer, City Manager, City Attorney, Community Development Commission, Management Services, Information Systems, City Planning, Engineering and Public Works, Building, Community Services, and the City's Credit Union.
3. Each department includes an eight-to-twelve-person conference room. In addition, there are eight larger and more flexible meeting rooms for City and public use ranging from 15 to 140 people.
4. The high public use departments; Planning, Engineering, Building, Community Services, Business License, Utilities and the Cashier are located along one continuous counter on the ground floor for greater public convenience.
5. The building was constructed for \$9,677,654 or \$91.30 per square foot. This was accomplished by using innovative designs and creative uses of materials. The total project cost was \$15.7 million which includes design and engineering, land cost, equipment, fixtures, furnishings, landscaping, and parking.
6. The design involves several creative uses of fiberglass material. All of the detailed plaster relief and virtually all of the wood trim and lattice are actually fiberglass. This reduced the cost about \$2 million, will reduce maintenance, and provide a durable material which maintains a like-new appearance.
7. The building includes state-of-the-art equipment for audio-visual uses, heating and air conditioning, flexible systems furniture, telephone, computers, noise masking, and parabolic lighting. The building will accommodate 21st Century technology when it occurs.

GRAPE DAY PARK

