



Helping those who help others

The Inland Regional Center's new headquarters in San Bernardino, California, was built on a fast track. Keith Regan learns from the general contractor how experience and planning enabled a variety of challenges to be handled in a compressed time frame

When JD Diffenbaugh was first asked to present a bid to the California Housing Foundation to build a new 600-person office complex for the Inland Regional Center, the contractor had only a very basic concept plan to work with in making its estimates. "We had a concept plan on a piece of paper and a hand-sketched elevation plan," says

Wendell Clark, director of business development at Riverside, California-based Diffenbaugh.

The project owner, meanwhile, had a strict budget and timeline schedule that were non-negotiable. Leveraging its 50 years of experience and its strong relationships with local trades and subcontractors, Diffenbaugh put together a proposal and was soon tapped to work with the design firm on a final plan. "It was not a design-

build project contractually because there were separate contracts, but it unfolded in much the same way,” Clark says, noting that Diffenbaugh also had a good relationship with the architects on the project, Ware Malcomb. “We have a lot of experience in bidding projects and knowing what costs are likely to be, and a lot of experience working with the other firms involved. It was all about collaboration and cooperation to make that budget number work. This is the future of our business, working in that collaborative manner.”

Although the general construction contract calls for Diffenbaugh to turn the approximately \$40 million project over to the owners in October 2009, the company expects to be a full six weeks ahead of schedule, with the Inland Regional Center, which serves persons with developmental disabilities, receiving the keys to the three-building complex in mid-August, according to project manager Paul Richardson, who has worked with Diffenbaugh for more than nine years and has been in the construction business for 30 years total.

In addition to enabling the Inland Regional Center to consolidate workers in a single location, it also allows more of its money to be used for additional client services, Clark notes. In all, the project consists of some 200,000 square feet of space, consisting of two three-story office buildings, a two-story building and a central facilities plant. The site, once a dairy farm, posed its own challenges, with a 70-foot-wide right-of-way owned by Southern California Edison running through the center of the project, which required carefully planning—and later changing—of landscaping to ensure the easement could be accessed for maintenance. The site landscaping includes a “very elegant” courtyard space between the two main buildings that includes fountains, specimen trees, walking trails and bridges over a small stream.

Ground was broken on the project in June 2008—before final design work on the tenant spaces was even half completed in some instances—and at the peak of work, Diffenbaugh had some 400 trades people and laborers working on the site. Keeping all those subs working in



“You have to have a total team effort on a job like this where everyone pulls together and is focused on the schedule as well as the finished product”

conjunction with each other and working safely was something the company spent a lot of time and energy on, starting from well before the first shovel went into the ground. Richardson credits Diffenbaugh’s lead site superintendent Bob Sanchez with keeping the daily challenges on the site manageable at all times. “He’s one of the best in the business,” he says, adding that many of the team players Diffenbaugh had working on the site have decades of experience in the field. “That experience certainly helps when surprises and unexpected issues arise.”

The project was completed without a single lost day due to injury or accident as well, something Richardson credits to Diffenbaugh’s extensive safety programs—it has an in-house safety officer on staff and also keeps a consultant under contract to run additional safety-focused training—as well as the cooperation of all the other contractors on the project.

One key reason Diffenbaugh was able to maintain the aggressive schedule was due to the fact that the three buildings were designed and constructed using the concrete tilt-up construction method. Diffenbaugh owes a large

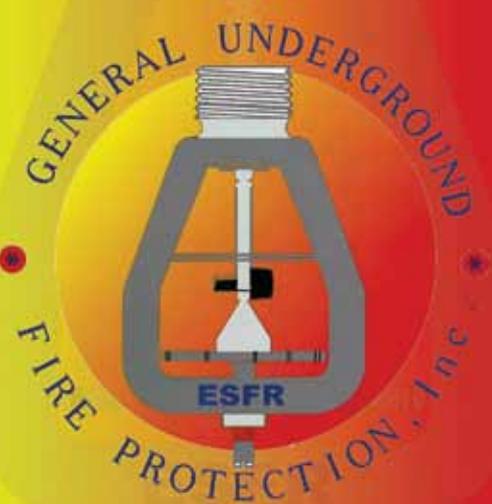
debt of gratitude to Inland Concrete Constructors (ICC), which is the best concrete subcontractor in all of Southern California, says Richardson. "ICC hit the ground running from the very start of the project and was the integral part in making the aggressive project schedule even possible."

The project was also blessed with good timing, at least as far as keeping costs down. When many of the subs were being selected early in 2008—some major trades were brought into the process earlier to help refine the initial bids and to work with the architects on the final design—the local construction market had all but completely dried up, helping the project to get favorable bids on a range of services. "We were able to get some favorable pricing because the marketplace wasn't very competitive at that time," Richardson comments.

The team approach extended to the owners as well as the end users, who were represented by construction manager Howard Cherry of Cherry & Mandel. "You have to have a total team effort on a job like this where everyone pulls together and is focused on the schedule as well as the finished product," says Richardson. "From the Inland Regional Center to the architects, the design team as well as all the subs, we had a great working relationship all across the board. An aggressive 'fast track' schedule becomes a lot easier when you have a team that can work together and take in stride the challenges that inevitably come up over the course of a project. That definitely happened very well on this project, and the result is a project that will be completed ahead of schedule and under budget." ■

**GENERAL UNDERGROUND
FIRE PROTECTION, Inc.**

Partners in Success



Phone (714) 632-8646
3910 East Coronado Street, Suite 202, Anaheim CA 92807

PROUD TO PARTNER WITH DIFFENBAUGH!



R&B Reinforcing Steel has fabricated and installed rebar in southern California since 1983. In addition to Inland Regional Center, we have reinforced entire business parks and single buildings over a million square feet! Our 30,000 square foot indoor fabrication facility can operate 24/7, our truck cranes can deliver your rebar without having to drive on the slab, and our experienced Ironworkers will install it!

R&B
REINFORCING
STEEL
CORPORATION

13581 Fifth Street • Chino CA 91710
Phone 800-429-5777 • fax 909-590-8352
www.rbsteel.net