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Finegold Alexander and Dimeo Const. complete \$85 million Fall River Justice Center

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Finegold Alexander + Associates Inc. and Dimeo Construction Co. completed the \$85 million, 154,000 s/f Fall River Justice Center that will serve as the new Superior and District Court. The building was designed for LEED Silver certification. The Commonwealth of Mass. funded the new courthouse, and project oversight was provided by the State Division for Capital Asset Management (DCAM).

Located on historic South Main St., this secure, modern facility replaces two older court buildings. The new courthouse contains nine courtrooms, clear and attractive public circulation areas, law library, jury pool and detention areas. Finegold Alexander also designed the 1996 renovation of the nearby former Durfee High School for the other three court departments, which together with this new building complete the upgrades of the Fall River Trial Courts.

The entire building, including all courtrooms, was designed to have natural light. The L-shaped building concept is compact and organizes the public space in an embracing ellipse creating both a great civic space and views out across the harbor. The structural bay is based on the dimensions of the courtrooms, and most floors are the same height to allow the building to be reconfigured more easily in the future.

Managed under Massachusetts's Chapter 149A alternative project delivery law permitting the use of construction management at risk (CM-at-Risk), Dimeo Construction was brought on board by the Division of Capital Asset Management (DCAM) as construction manager (CM) during the initial design phase (schematic design) to assist the architect and owner in design review and project budgeting analysis. Taking the place of a traditional Design-Bid-Build method with a general contractor, the role of the CM is to proactively identify potential constructability issues, cost-saving opportunities and aid in the determination of durability and quality materials. This is the first DCAM project where the CM was brought on board for the entire preconstruction phase. This new delivery method of CM-at-Risk permitted early approvals for cost control and input into constructability.

Early strategic planning and modeling was used to maintain the programmed square footage while meeting the functional and security needs of this busy courthouse. Creative use of specialty materials, such as light grey dolomite limestone and renewable eucalyptus millwork combined with durable, more standard materials throughout, were essential to balance all of the project goals to achieve dignity, community, accessibility, security and sustainability within a responsible budget for a state court facility.

Designed and specified to be an energy-efficient building and help prevent carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions associated with fossil fuel energy use, the Fall River Justice Center and the entire project team was honored with the Energy Star award at the AIA National Convention in Miami on June 10th.

Additional project team members included:

- * Carol R. Johnson Associates, landscape architect
- * Mistry Associates, Inc., civil engineer
- * Richmond So Engineers Inc., structural engineer
- * Arup, mechanical, electrical, plumbing, fire protection and security engineer
- * GZA, geotechnical engineer
- * Acentech Inc., acoustical consultant
- * Stefura Associates, interior design
- * Coco Raynes Associates, environmental graphics
- * Kessler McGuinness & Associates, ADA
- * Howard Stein Hudson Associates, traffic
- * The Green Engineer, LEED
- * Faithful + Gould, cost consultant
- * Collaborative Lighting, lighting
- * Norton Remmer, code consultant.

"The clean lines and overall simplicity reflect the efficient design while simultaneously highlighting all the wonderful detail, such as in the stunning courtroom ceilings," said Liz Minnis, co-director of programming for DCAM. "The natural lighting throughout is wonderful, and the occupants will welcome the operable windows. I particularly appreciate the strong design of the utilitarian egress stair towers use of stone facing, on the interior and exterior and how those powerful elements are offset by the glazing on both sides."

"This is an exciting time for Fall River as it repositions itself as a leader among New England cities, focused on economic revitalization and moving the city away from its dependence on fossil fuels and toward a greener future," said Maurice Finegold, president of Finegold Alexander + Associates Inc. "We were thrilled to be part of this initiative and designed a building that speaks to those values, providing abundant light and views throughout the interior without the architectural and MEP/energy costs associated with the typical atrium spaces that are often included in civic buildings."

"The entire construction process was a great collaboration between the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the Courts system, the City of Fall River, and the design team," said Stephen Rutledge, executive vice president at Dimeo Construction. "As a result, the team has made the very best use of public construction dollars to achieve the lofty goals of the project. Everyone involved in the project played a part in its success, and we know that the building's efficiency and civic stature will serve the city well for many years to come."