



## Horse Farm Detention Center

*What could the lush rolling hills of Kentucky's horse country possibly have in common with a state-of-the-art correctional facility? Not much. At least not until the court ordered the city of Lexington and surrounding Fayette County to relieve inmate overcrowding by June 2000. That was when local officials ponied up more than \$70 million for a new detention center that would be located in the heart of thoroughbred horse farms.*

But they are not just any old horse farms. These farms are home to some of the world's premier breeders and trainers, including such prestigious farms as Three Chimneys, home of 1997 Kentucky Derby and Preakness winner Silver Charm and 1977 Triple Crown winner Seattle Slew.

Situated in the middle of this exclusive, genteel enclave were 71 beautiful but unkempt acres. "We wanted to take this land over and utilize it as a detention site, but first we had to assure the owners of the farms along this corridor that we would incorporate the horse farm look," says Ray Sabbatine, administrator of the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Detention Center.

After 2 years of construction, the new facility opened in May 1999. It sits on scenic Old Frankfort Pike, greeting visitors and passers-by with a beautiful pond at the front of the property and triple-planked white wood fencing around the perimeter. The administration building sits atop a hill and looks remarkably like all of the other horse barns in the area. It is flanked on either side by a 7-foot-tall concrete wall with a facade that looks like a rambling stone fence. Such a pastoral scene is amazingly deceptive. For behind that wall, at the foot of the hill, about one-half mile away and completely invisible from the road, is one of the most technologically advanced prisons in the State.

The facility houses all levels of prisoners, "from Otis the town drunk to multiple murderers," Sabbatine says. The goal was to create small groups to make management safer and more efficient. "When you have eight dorms of eight beds each, you have a lesser apparent density of your population, simply because you've broken it down into smaller, more manageable groups."

According to Sabbatine, the prison employs the "sub-dayroom concept," a design that allows corrections officers to supervise large numbers of inmates. Sub-dayrooms in each of the facility's "pods" house eight inmates each. There are eight sub-dayrooms per pod. The sub-dayroom is typically used for passive recreation. A larger area within the pod is used for delivery of various types of programming (e.g., educational, religious, orientation materials, messages about events) that originate from the system's central broadcast facility. This programming is either purchased or created and edited inhouse and then broadcast to one or all of the units.

In addition, the facility incorporates video-conferencing technology. This allows judges to talk to inmates or conduct video arraignments from chambers or a courtroom. Video visitation also is available for handicapped family members who cannot walk the length of the public corridor to the inmate living areas. Telemedicine technologies are being used for mental health evaluations and will soon come online for other medical needs. A computerized card and card readers are used by correctional officers to access various areas. The cards do not require swiping. They are automatically read when an officer presents it within 18 inches of the door.

As for perimeter security, Sabbatine says it was determined in part by the environment and by community sentiment. Because the surrounding community made it clear it did not want fences topped with concertina, prison officials used 23-foot-tall exterior walls for the prison units. The result is a windowless facility that allows light to shine in from above the recreation areas and through the cell fronts, which are made of polycarbonate. Security cameras are "all over the place," Sabbatine adds, and can be remotely and individually activated and manipulated.

Even with all the special considerations that needed to be addressed, the detention center was completed in less than 2 years (average start-to-finish on a project such as this generally runs 3 to 4 years), and came in \$6 million under budget. The trick, Sabbatine says, was working with the "design-build" concept.

“The design-build concept means that you have concurrent design and building. You do 30 percent of your drawings up front, get a guaranteed cost from your builder, and start construction. At the same time, you start on your second contract. We got the idea from the private sector. We went to a design-build seminar in Florida 2 years ago when we were under court order to begin construction and have it finished by June 1999. Design-build was the only way we could accomplish it.”

Sabbatine credits the design-build strategy not only with saving money and time, but also with allowing officials to incorporate new technologies. “We traded out tile floors so we could [have funds to] upgrade our technology,” he says. “We have concrete floors, but who cares? In most cases, we negotiated the expenditure of funds based on our original budgeted amount. That’s how we pulled \$6 million out of the original cost.”

The detention center opened with 1,200 inmates, even though it was built for 2,200. So far, there have been no complaints from the surrounding community, Sabbatine says. Prison officials involved community members in

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the design process from the beginning. Once the design was displayed in a public hearing and the community saw the facility’s conceptual design, support was immediate. Even the former vice mayor, Teresa Isaac, was impressed with the design. “It will be the first jail in *Southern Living*,” she said when the project was first shown to the city’s governing council.

***For more information about the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Detention Center, contact Ray Sabbatine, administrator, 606-233-0844.***



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