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Gay Construction and Cooper Carry Inc.
Boy Scouts of America
Atlanta Area Council
Volunteer Service Center
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From conception to planning, from construction to the building's inception, the Boy Scouts of America Atlanta Area Council Volunteer Service Center remains true to the organization's all-encompassing motto: Be prepared.

David Larkin, executive director of the Boy Scouts of America - Atlanta, said the new building allows the administration to be prepared to best serve its Scout leaders and troops, something its previous location at the Robert Woodruff Service Center was inhibiting.

Sean McLendon, the project director at Cooper Carry Inc., the project's design firm, said the 87,500-member organization (consisting of 74,000 youths and 13,500 adult leaders) was growing too big and too fast for its old location.

"The Boy Scouts has been a tenant of the United Way Building for over 20 years and [has] been shoehorned in there," he said. "There were people in shared offices, in closets, all over one another, and in a space just under 20,000 square feet."

Functionally speaking, he said, the organization wasn't able to efficiently serve Scout leaders who come into the office for training, program help and other needs. But the nonprofit's administration wasn't sure how best to address the problems.

"When Gay Construction contracted Cooper Carry to work on this project, we found out that the Boy Scouts didn't really know what they wanted. They knew, however, that they had to operate better and change the status quo," McLendon said.

"When we were coming up with the building plan with Cooper Carry, we knew it had to fulfill three requirements," Larkin said. "We wanted it to be a place where Scout leaders can receive training, get program help such as signing their troops up for camp, and where they can get uniforms and supplies."

The location of the new service center was also an important factor for Larkin and the organization.

"We wanted it to be very accessible and also be visible in the community," he said.

In order to come up with some potential locations, the Boy Scouts went to the Atlanta Regional Commission to map the ZIP codes of Scout leaders.

"When profiling a site, we looked at it as if we were hiring a person. Where we are now, we're in a 15-mile radius of 80 percent of our members," he said.

The service center is at the corner of Circle 75 Parkway and Windy Ridge Parkway. The negotiation and purchase of this site was headed by Don Perry, president and CEO of Lavista Associates Inc., a commercial real estate firm in Atlanta.

The group launched a capital campaign nearly three years ago to raise money for the new service center, among other projects. To date, \$23 million has been raised through corporate, foundation, family business and individual contributions, only \$2 million shy of the original \$25 million goal.

Phil Rutledge, of Gay Construction, said the project, which took a year to complete, cost an estimated \$6.6 million.

The new council building is approximately 53,000 square feet and was completed with some services donated from individuals, design and companies.

"Just to name a few, Acuity Brands donated the building's light fixtures, Fred Mortensen of Mortensen Woodwork in Union City, Georgia, donated the wood paneling and engraving work in the Eagle Room, and the office furniture was donated by BellSouth," Larkin said. "Gay Construction also donated some work, including a huge wooden Boy Scout emblem."

The administration moved into the new service center in September 2002 and opened for business a month later.

Sixty percent of the building is conventional administrative spaces. The rest is a leader program center and training rooms, the lobby and public corridors, and the largest Scouts retail store in the nation.

"It was interesting working with the building guidelines stipulated by the prop-

erty seller," McLendon said. "They weren't going to approve any log cabin design, but we wanted to have the natural look and feel that's reflective of the organization."

The balance between contemporary office space and the spirit of the Boy Scouts is exemplified by features in the design of the building.

The lobby integrates the use of natural materials, such as Tennessee field stone, and also features exposed trusses and wood decking in the ceiling.

The exterior features one-of-a-kind bas-relief sculptures of the Boy Scout merit badges located on pre-cast piers around the building.

"This project involved team members and contributors who were all once Scouts themselves," McLendon said.

Vance White, senior vice president of Beers Skanska Inc. and a member of the ULI-Atlanta awards committee, said the dedication and pride of the people involved in the project weighed heavily in the decision to recognize the building as the small-scale project of the year award winner.

"One of the main things we look at in all the entries is the financial success of the project," he said. "However, since the Boy Scouts of America is a nonprofit organization, its entry presented us with a more challenging decision-making process."

White said they looked at how the project serves the organization and how well the organization uses its space to serve the community.

"It was evident to us that the building mirrored the Boy Scouts' mission, which is character-building and service for its Scouts and leaders," he said.

Larkin couldn't be more pleased or proud of the organization's new service center.

"I think we aced the functionality of the building and also created an opening and welcoming appeal to our visitors," he said.

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