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Hawaii Wildlife Center

Client /

Hawaii Wildlife Center

Architecture Firm /

Ruhl Walker Architects

An on-going series of case studies that feature projects by AIA members participating in The 1% who are making pro bono service an integral part of design practice.



Project**Hawaii Wildlife Center****Location****Halaula, Hawaii****Date****2007-2012****Client****Hawaii Wildlife Center****Client liaison****Linda Elliott****Architecture firm****Ruhl Walker Architects****Architecture team****William Ruhl, AIA; Sandra Baron, AIA;****Grant Scott****Project Collaborators****Rhoady Lee Architecture & Design;****Umemoto Cassandro Design****Corporation; Ryan Associates****General Contractors; William****Blakeney, Inc.; Peter J.K. Dahlberg;****P.E., LLC; Mark Morrison; Kohala****Engineering; John K. Maute;****Tinguely Development Inc.; Meridian****Construction & Development****Cost****\$970,742****Value of pro bono architecture****services****\$200,000 (est.)****Area****3,420 sq. ft. main facility****1,116 sq. ft. covered lanai****More info****www.ruhlwalker.com****www.hawaiiwildlifecenter.org****www.rlad.net****Architect /****William (Will) Ruhl, AIA, Principal, Ruhl Walker Architects**

Before I became involved with the Hawaii Wildlife Center, I had visited the Big Island and fallen in love with the place. After returning to Boston, I continued to read the local news and came across an article about Linda Elliot and her efforts to establish the Hawaii Wildlife Center. I emailed her asking how I could help. She asked if I could be the architect for what sounded like an existing building. I went back to Hawaii in 2004 and learned their goal had changed to create a new building, which was even more interesting and so I happily agreed.

The conversation around the design process went smoothly. Linda had done research through her friends on the mainland who run similar wildlife centers. She gathered information about what worked in their facilities, which

Client /**Linda Elliott, President and Director, Hawaii Wildlife Center**

Every time the planning process for the Hawaii Wildlife Center got to a point where we needed a professional, someone would show up, and finding the architect was no different. I got an email from Will Ruhl. He was interested in the project and asked how he could help. He met with us and after seeing the property, Will was on board. It was truly an incredible event that he found us.

Hawaii is the endangered species capital of the world and at the time it didn't have a rehabilitation facility built for native wildlife in the state. I've responded to oil spills worldwide and had better facilities to work from in those places than I did in Hawaii. The basis for the project was to correct the shortfall of not having this resource to help deal with the sick, injured, and mostly threatened and endangered species.



provided some helpful technical details. I had never designed a similar facility and was not burdened with examples of what worked for someone else. This made it possible to tailor the project to the local climate as well as to create a facility for wildlife rehabilitation. We talked about the sequence of how animals would come into the facility and the triage process. We found that the Center would need a lot of spaces similar to human hospitals and their facilities. Linda enjoyed that we were able to put our minds together to design a facility that worked well for the employees, relieved stress for the animals, and had educational spaces for visitors.

The educational and community outreach components were a key aspect of the design and a focal point of the building. One example of how visitor interaction is encouraged is through viewing windows that allow visitors to see endangered

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— William Ruht, AIA

“Students from the middle school next door come over to do community service projects and we provide a science lab for them.”

— Linda Elliott

Talking with Will about the project from the very beginning was a wonderful process. The details of the design, the interest Will showed, and the information we were able to share with each other added to the value of the final product. I had the opportunity to walk through other wildlife conservation facilities that exist on the continental United States. I took ideas from them as well as came up with strategies for layouts that would work better. I learned at the other facilities what the users encountered after their spaces were built; they didn't get the benefits that I did with Will of having a team sit down, pick my brain, and ask me about the rehabilitation process. We talked about the flow of the animals coming in the door and the specifics of what needed to happen in each of the treatment rooms. Then Will walked me through the rooms in the plan and described what he thought the layout of each space should be. As a result, our space has an incredible flow. Being in a purpose built facility, versus a renovated pre-existing



species being treated. Ultimately, the facility was designed with no wasted space and the building site is large enough to accommodate future growth.

We wanted the building to be as sustainable as possible, working with the area's vernacular architecture and addressing the local climate conditions. One of the Center's board members, Paul Ryan, runs Ryan Construction. He put his staff at our service. They started the LEED certification process for the building, working pro bono as well. Together we went through the construction documents item by item, shooting for LEED Platinum. We brought in a mechanical engineer who came up with a solution for the high air exchange that was needed in the treatment areas. The team looked at how to create an efficient system utilizing local trade winds and shading to naturally and mechanically cool and ventilate the building. Due to Hawaii's beautiful climate, the building did not need fully-enclosed spaces for climate protection. We took advantage of

overhangs and covered spaces, getting extra functionality with minimal impact on the budget. The entire facility is solar powered, including the ventilation system. The irrigation system has a cistern that was donated, which collects water to irrigate the wildlife habitat and native plant species garden.

The community came together to bring recognition to the Center with many people either working pro bono or donating materials. A local firm, Rhoady Lee Architecture & Design, heard about the project and offered to work with us pro bono. They helped keep the construction process moving and kept me up to date with the progress of the project when I could not be in Hawaii.

The most exciting part of the project was finally getting to see the building under construction. Linda had been trying to get funding privately for twelve years before we broke ground. Even at the depths of the recession, we were able to privately fundraise enough money to

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— Linda Elliott

space, is rare for wildlife rehabilitation centers. We are very fortunate that the Center's design was focused around the movement of the animals through the processes of care.

The most successful aspect of the project is the programmatic layout. I went into the design process having only worked in substandard conditions, so just having the bare minimum for me and for Hawaii would have been a big achievement. Will took the design beyond the minimum. Now that we're in the space, it has exceeded our expectations and is a source of pride and joy each day. Once an animal arrives in care, the process of treatment goes smoothly because the space was built with intent for our mission and with a good understanding of what we needed. We have become a role model for other wildlife rehabilitation facilities that are either building or improving upon their original space. Colleagues and other organizations have asked to come and look at what we have done to learn from it.

This project was truly a community effort from day one. The best example of this was the event that we call the 'Grand Opening,' held after the completion of the project in November of 2011. I could not have scripted such a wonderful day. Close to 400 people from the community came; there were students singing and giving tours of the facility as well as speakers and performers. Due to the build up of support for the project and the number of people that have donated to it, everyone knew the project was a product of the community.

The space has already touched many lives and people are so excited about it. For a rural

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— William Ruhl, AIA



build the facility. The Center was built in two steps, starting with the shell; then using the design as a launching point to fundraise for the rest of the budget.

The project had a large impact on everyone at my office. We felt really good about doing a pro bono project. We bill for everything we do for other clients, so in many ways not getting paid liberated us to have more professional fun. We got support from clients who heard we were doing this project; for instance, a little school outside of Boston hired us to design a small faculty housing project. The school specifically mentioned that they wanted to work with us because we were doing pro bono work. Since the Hawaii Wildlife Center project started, we have signed up for more pro bono work. A small design firm like ours can benefit from doing good deeds; it opens up other opportunities you would not get otherwise. This project has been published and won design awards, and we are very proud of that. Working for a mission-based organization has been a meaningful experience. It has helped us focus on what is important and puts other day-to-day frustrations into perspective.•

community like ours, it is great to have this resource. Students from the middle school next door come over to do community service projects and we provide a science lab for them. There are nearly fifty volunteers who come on a regular basis to help maintain the facility and the garden. We also have volunteers from the Civil Air Patrol who fly in birds from throughout the Hawaiian Islands; they have donated all of their flight time and fuel to bring injured birds to the facility for care. We hope to increase our outreach even more by improving our education program and creating public areas that encourage visitor engagement and participation.

Joining forces with Will allowed the Center to take a huge step forward. We plan to fill our public space, which is tailored to increase the impact on the visitors that come from both Hawaii and out of state, with museum quality exhibits. We are the only facility in the Pacific Islands region. We now support other island territories including Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and American Samoa to provide a resource and a model to look to and to help them achieve wildlife protection in their island ecosystems.•



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