A study in texture, transparency and materiality, this corner walk-up cafe aims to inspire and enhance the area’s rare pedestrian culture. The main focus of the design is to create a calm, inviting public space that directly engages its frenetic urban setting.
PROJECT NARRATIVE

The cafe is located in a district where thousands of workers drive into their fully serviced closed campuses for 8-12 hours a day and seldom leave, primarily due to the lack of outside options. The nearest residential neighborhood is a ten minute walk from this busy corner, which serves direct access to a major LA freeway. Pedestrian activity in the area is lacking, to say the least - but the desire is clearly present.

Through a grandfathered zoning code which allows sidewalk counter service, the client expanded the footprint of the enclosed structure, which houses the kitchen, food prep area, coffee service and restrooms for the new cafe. Through negotiations with the city, and an offer to also improve disabled access within the structure and at the sidewalk, the footprint of the patio was allowed to expand.

Confronted with ubiquitous Angeleno issues that occur where the pedestrian realm meet highly trafficked corners, the design addresses needs for safety and protection from automobiles, noise, pollutants and litter. The combination of a cast-in-place wall with built-in seating and a patterned wood screen guards visitors from all of the above while also creating an intimate space with views diffused from within. With its semi-enclosed nature and sun shading qualities, the cafe becomes a place of respite while still connecting to the street.

The real joy in the project came from working with the patterning, texture and connections of the various wood slats, steel and concrete elements. Variability in the size, angle, color and spacing of the cedar screen draws attention from passersby [at all speeds], as well as offers differing degrees of shading and view mitigation. The concrete seating is contoured for comfort and follows an arc at the corner, allowing for seamless continuity and flow of materials.

SUSTAINABILITY

Key sustainability aspects of this project lie in the reuse of portions of the existing structure, as well as predicted energy and water savings throughout the life of the project.

Though the city offered carte-blanch space for a new building, the existing structure's main bearing walls, roof and concrete slab were retained. All finishes are are low or non-voc and low-maintenance. Restroom fixtures are all low-flow per the latest state code regulations, and all old kitchen equipment has been replaced by higher efficiency units. LED lighting is used throughout. Landscape features will soon be placed behind the large slat wall, which diffuses late afternoon sun and heat. All landscape will be drought tolerant - native grasses and trees - with below-grade drip irrigation.

ACCESSIBILITY

Enhanced accessibility was designed for both customers and employees and parking includes an extra disabled parking stall. Also, in an agreement with the city, the client agreed to repair and enhance disabled access along the sidewalk and corner ramp.
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