



Bridging History And Healing

Case Study In Brick: San Antonio State Hospital, San Antonio, TX

Project Completion: 2024
Size: 535,000 sf

Acme Brick Tile & Stone Products Featured:
Acme Brick Ebony Velour, Acme Brick
Monte Carlo Heritage, Salado Stone Sonoma
Cream Chopped, Glazed Brick, Special Shapes





Admissions and Administrative Wing

History + Context

In a groundbreaking effort to modernize Texas' psychiatric care, the San Antonio State Hospital has undergone a remarkable transformation. The Texas Health and Human Services Commission and University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio tasked the design team of HKS and New York-based design firm architecture+ with creating a therapeutic environment that honors local heritage while enhancing patient recovery.

San Antonio State Hospital has been in operation since 1892, just a year after Acme Brick Company's founding. State and university officials wanted the replacement hospital to honor the history and landscape of San Antonio, including the San Antonio Missions, which date to the 1700s. The new facility, comprised of eight conjoined buildings adjacent to the original hospital, was funded by an effort of the Texas Legislature to update its aging facilities across the state.



Chapel and Café



Brick Continues to Interior Porch



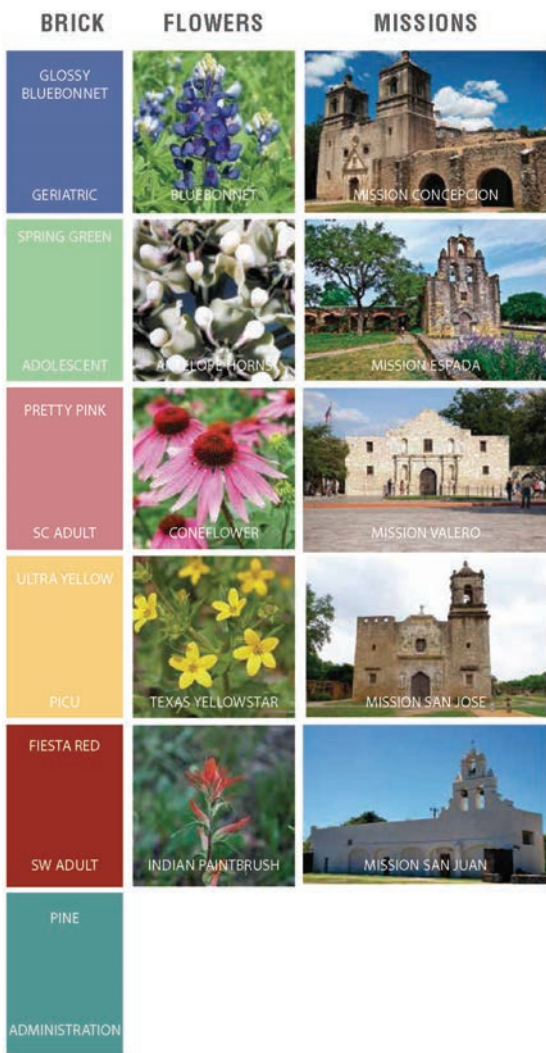
Northern Face

Design Philosophy

The facility's patient-first design includes open spaces, natural light, and private rooms – all intended to honor patients' dignity and inspire hope. Communal areas for therapy and gatherings, framed by Acme Brick walls, form the heart of each patient building. By utilizing low and sleek building forms, the architects created a design and experience closer to a personable and human scale. Coupled with a modern material palette that is true to the area, culture, and surrounding, the project takes on a feeling of warmth, of welcome, and of being at home...a design that inspires healing.



Adult Inpatient Wing



Materials and Forms that Echo San Antonio's Heritage

The hospital's exterior features the decorative quatrefoil motif and vibrant colors seen throughout San Antonio. Inspired by the city's Spanish colonial missions, the design creates welcoming entryways and sun-dappled corridors, echoing the city's UNESCO World Heritage site. Wood grain panels bring warmth to the interior and exterior design. They complement the hospital's field brick and limestone, familiar elements of south-central Texas architecture. Each carefully laid Acme brick contributes to a homey atmosphere, banishing the cold, institutional feel often associated with hospitals.



Glazed Brick: A Colorful Wayfinding Solution

The use of distinct brick colors and patterns for each building at the San Antonio State Hospital plays a crucial role in enhancing wayfinding and reducing confusion and stress for patients, staff, and visitors. By incorporating glazed brick from Acme Brick, Tile & Stone, each building is visually differentiated, making it easier to identify and remember specific locations. This thoughtful design approach not only aids in navigation but also contributes to a sense of familiarity and comfort within the hospital environment.





Brick Artistry

The hospital showcases a thoughtful approach to brick detailing, utilizing a diverse material palette to create an engaging façade. The design masterfully incorporates various bond patterns, alternating between running and stacked configurations to add rhythm and interest to the building's exterior. Dark, buff, and glazed brick are artfully combined, each playing a distinct role in the overall composition.

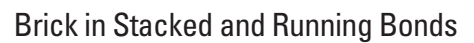
The exterior architecture prioritizes a strong connection to the surrounding community, integrating contextual elements that reflect its cultural and environmental identity. A contemporary masonry façade was selected for its durability, thermal performance, and ability to evoke warmth and a welcoming atmosphere—key to creating a space that feels like home.

To further enhance this sense of place, abstracted mosaic patterns were incorporated using colored glazed bricks. These patterns, inspired by the vibrancy of the local culture, community heritage, and biophilic influences, add depth and visual interest while reinforcing the hospital's connection to its environment. The exterior design aligns with the hospital's overarching vision to provide a therapeutic, uplifting setting for patients, families, and staff, ensuring a balance between resilience and a restorative atmosphere."

Rachael Rome, EDAC, LSSGB, LEED AP BD+C

Studio Practice Leader, Mental Behavioral Health

HKS



REF. GLAZED BRICK
COLOR LEGEND ABOVE
FOR TYPE

D2 UPPER LEVEL
115'-0"

DASHED LINE DENOTES
LIMITS OF GLAZED BRICK
COLOR

NOTE: WHERE GLAZED
BRICK TYPE NOT
DENOTED, BRICK TYPE TO
BE #801

TYPE 03

TYPE 02

TYPE 01

TYPE 05

TYPE 06

TYPE 04

D1 MAIN LEVEL
100'-0"

The drawing shows a cross-section of a brick wall with multiple levels. The wall is composed of various brick types, including glazed bricks (indicated by dashed lines) and standard bricks (indicated by solid lines). The levels are marked as D2 UPPER LEVEL (115'-0") and D1 MAIN LEVEL (100'-0"). The wall is divided into sections labeled TYPE 01 through TYPE 06. The drawing also includes a color legend for the glazed bricks and a note stating that where a glazed brick type is not denoted, the brick type to be used is #801.

01 CHAPEL

In projects like this one, with diverse material palettes, managing transitions between different materials can present significant challenges. Acme Brick Company offers architectural support services to address these complexities, including assistance from in-house registered engineers and technical experts. For this hospital, Acme provided several specialized brick shapes and detailed their connections and applications:

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- 01 EX
- GLAZED BRICK TO WRAP CORNER AND CONTINUE COURSING PATTERN
- 7'-0"
- D3 TOP LEVEL
120'-0"
- D2 UPPER LEVEL
110'-0"
- D1 MAIN LEVEL
100'-0"

GENERAL NOTE:
GLAZED BRICK TO BE LOCATED AT EVERY OTHER HORIZONTAL
COURSE & EVERY OTHER VERTICAL COURSE

GENERAL NOTE:
EXTERIOR ACCESS STAIR HAS BEEN REMOVED FROM DRAWING FOR CLARITY.
REFERENCE PLANS FOR LOCATIONS OF EXTERIOR ACCESS STAIRS.



GENERAL NOTE: EXTERIOR ACCESS STAIR HAS BEEN REMOVED FROM IMAGE FOR CLARITY
REFERENCE PLANS FOR LOCATION OF EXTERIOR ACCESS STAIRS

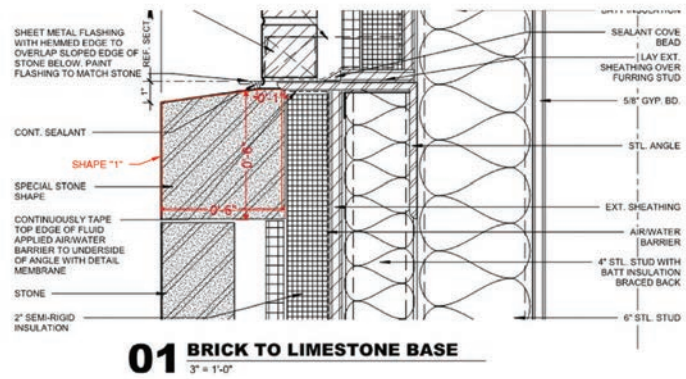
$$132'' = 1'-0''$$



Brick to Limestone Transition. See Section Below.

"We are extremely proud of the transformation of our state hospital system and the opportunities being created. These projects will improve the well-being of even more people across the state. We're not just building hospitals — we're rebuilding lives."

**Scott Schalchlin, Deputy Executive Commissioner,
Texas Health and Human Services Commission's
Health and Specialty Care System**



Therapeutic Elements

Rooms are grouped in smaller residential pods to evoke a sense of community among patients. The hospital offers a variety of therapeutic, recreational, and social experiences to prepare patients for returning to life outside the hospital. Active outdoor courtyards feature basketball and sports courts, living landscapes, and levels of social zones, encouraging healthy lifestyle habits, positive social interactions, and greater patient empowerment.

Sustainability

The campus design features colorful shading devices to reduce solar heat gain and uses brick as the primary exterior cladding. Chosen for its durability, strength, and longevity, brick enhances both aesthetics and sustainability. Its excellent thermal mass properties regulate indoor temperatures, reducing the need for artificial climate control. Brick's durability ensures low maintenance and

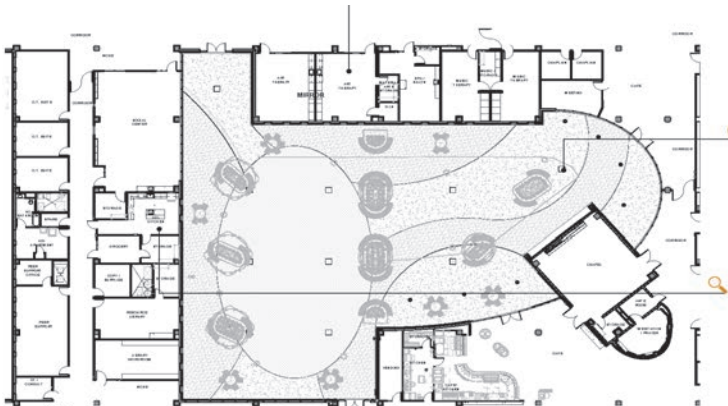
long-term cost-effectiveness, while its local sourcing minimizes transportation emissions. This thoughtful design creates a resilient and restorative environment, reflecting the hospital's commitment to patient well-being and environmental stewardship.

Capacity + Service

San Antonio State Hospital bolsters access to mental and behavioral health services for people throughout South Texas. The hospital serves approximately 270 people annually from over 50 counties in the region. The 3-story, 535,000-square-foot modern replacement hospital provides 300 private patient rooms in a therapeutic environment. The hospital promotes individual dignity and personal safety for patients, staff, and families. By blending modern care with San Antonio's rich history, the renovated hospital sets a new standard for mental health facilities.



Outdoor Courtyard



Courtyard Plan



SAN ANTONIO STATE HOSPITAL, SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

Architects: HKS, Inc., Dallas, TX; Architecture+, Troy, NY
General Contractor: Vaughn Construction, Universal City, TX
Masonry: Shadrock & Williams Masonry, Ltd., Helotes, TX
Landscape Architect: Bender Wells Clark Design, San Antonio, TX
Civil Engineer: ESP Associates, San Antonio, TX
Structural Engineer: Walter P. Moore, Dallas, TX
MEP Engineer: Shah Smith & Associates, Houston, TX
Graphics/Wayfinding: FMG Design, Houston, TX
Photography: Joe Aker; Lou Curtis

