

The San Diego County Administration Center

- Called “The Jewel of the Bay,” the County Administration Center was completed in 1938
- It’s a Beaux Arts/Spanish Revival style building. It has a red mission tile roof and features glazed Franciscan inlaid pottery tiles. The predominant tower is described as a “Public Works Moderne” style.
- The center was designed by a collection of local architects that included Samuel Wood Hamill, William Templeton Johnson, Richard Requa and Louis John Gill
- Its design included innovative piers and concrete construction techniques to resist earthquakes, important after the devastating quake in the Los Angeles area in 1933
- The complex was originally planned by city planner, John Nolan, to be at another site and to consolidate city and government offices to one location. His first draft proposal was rejected by voters in 1908.
- In 1926, Nolan created a new plan that located the government center at its present location on the newly dredged tidelands. That plan was approved by voters in 1927.
- The Great Depression of the late 1920s/early 30s delayed construction until 1935
- When built, it cost \$1,750,000 and was funded by 1 million dollars from the national government’s Works Progress Administration and \$750,000 in local funds. That total of \$1,750,000 in 1938 is equal to approximately \$13,400,000 in today’s funds.
- On July 16, 1938 the building was dedicated by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt who came all the way to San Diego from Washington, DC to speak before a crowd of 25,000 people. This was about 25% of the population of San Diego at that time
- The building has been used as only County of San Diego offices since 1964 after the City of San Diego completed its offices in downtown San Diego
- In 2014, the County Administration Waterfront Park opened. This park flanks the building on both its north and south sides
- Featured artwork on the west side of the building, facing San Diego Bay, is sculptor Donal Hord’s 1939 statue, *Guardian of the Water*



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Photo by Gerald W. Shonkwiler, AIA Emeritus



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