



PROJECT SHOWCASE 2024

Spotlighting the best in design and MAS projects





Above: As the owner's rep, consultant Eli Huff also oversaw the architecture and construction of the administrative part of the building. The lobby was designed to serve double duty as an event space for fundraisers. Walls can open up, and furniture easily rolled away.

Right: Bakery prep sits next to the larger prep area. Staff use large mixers to make anything from rolls to mashed potatoes.



Beauty Meets Function

Meals on Wheels of Metro Tulsa is transformed into a show-stopping building on the outside, while its inside matches that energy with an efficient workflow designed around high-volume capacity and employee wellness.

By Amelia Levin | Photos by Adam Murphy, Adam Murphy Photography

You don't come across a foodservice consultant who is also a certified owner's representative, construction project manager, professional chef and former K-12 school foodservice operator every day. Eli Huff is all of these — and his various skill sets converged during a landmark project in 2022 for Oklahoma's Meals on Wheels of Metro Tulsa. Throughout the U.S., via local facilities and programs, Meals on Wheels' staff and volunteers prepare and deliver meals to seniors who are unable to cook or purchase meals for themselves. To meet Tulsa's needs, Huff's project included a brand-new, 28,000-square-foot facility. The design incorporated a 10,000-square-foot production kitchen, bulk meal packaging facility, office spaces, event area and a volunteer engagement center.

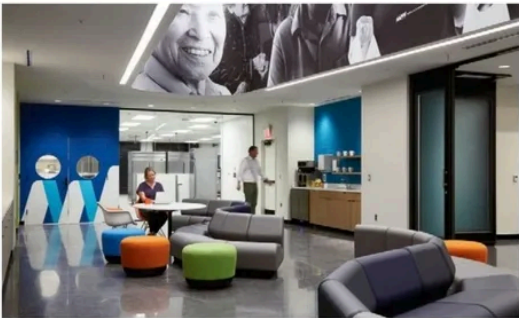
When Calvin Moore, then president and CEO of Meals on Wheels of Metro Tulsa, invited SFG Consulting to

help renovate the existing facility for an expanded foodservice operation, Huff jumped at the opportunity. He knew full well the need to improve the space, after learning that the Meals on Wheels team produced 1,000 meals per day out of an 8,000-square-foot facility. "And that space wasn't just the kitchen," Huff explains. "It also included the warehouse, cold storage and administrative offices. They were growing out of every corner of the building, and it was a 50-year-old kitchen."

In 2016, Meals on Wheels was ready to expand in a much larger way and to build a completely new facility. The project's primary push involved calculations that the senior population would grow exponentially in the 2020s. It became a long-term project — one that stretched over six years. Major setbacks included COVID-19, a real estate issue and a subsequent location change that equaled a second round of designers' plans. Finally, the project was completed in October 2022.

Despite all of the challenges, the ends justified the means as far as Huff is concerned. Meals on Wheels of Metro Tulsa now has a modern facility that increases output and decreases utility costs with technology designed into the facility. The building's architecture elevates the nonprofit's mission as well. Many credit positively impacted fundraising efforts to the new facility and visual recognition of the building. "The architects at Selser Schaefer Architects and the entire team nailed all aspects of the vision and our main mission, which was to get Meals on Wheels more visual recognition from day-to-day cars driving by," notes Huff.

The finished project is a stunning and modern building that values form and function. The larger space increases the feeding capacity of Meals on Wheels to 6,000 meals per day and offers employees a comfortable and flexible space to work. With the current, 5-day production cycle, the production capability is more than 1.5 million meals per year. The team went from working in an 8,200-square-foot building to a 28,000-square-foot facility, complete with a 10,000-square-foot kitchen. It was a transformation of immense proportions. "Monumental" is how Huff describes the project. It required patience at all turns, from the necessary time it



MEALS ON WHEELS OF METRO TULSA

took the nonprofit to gain required board reviews and approvals; to coordination between architects, sub-contractors and the owner; to Huff's position serving as both the foodservice design consultant and owner's representative on the project. Often contracted for nonprofit and government jobs — and/or by smaller organizations that don't have a construction manager on staff — an owner's representative oversees and advises the owner throughout the design and construction process. This ensures that all players meet the client's wants and needs throughout the project's life cycle.

Huff made sure the foodservice consulting and equipment specification work was separated from the owner's rep and construction project management work. The scope of the work for both entities included site selection and real estate management; bid review and contract management; concept development; construction management; foodservice facility design; equipment specifications; bulk refrigeration design; and even interior design, furniture, fixture and equipment procurement for the administrative areas. Huff's team additionally provided some operational consulting for the on-site foodservice operator, TRIO Community Meals.

"We also made it part of the architect's scope to cross-check what we did for foodservice design and ensured that our fees were not based on the project



Eli Huff
Owner
SFG Consulting

"The reward of designing something that benefits the community as a whole, and especially those in the food insecurity sector, outweighs the challenges."

scaling up, so that no matter what happens to the budget, we're getting paid the same," Huff says.

Huff's chef and operational background played major roles in this consulting project. "We had to be very flexible with schedule and budget," he says, "however, the reward of designing something that benefits the community as a whole, and especially those in the food insecurity sector, outweighs the challenges."

Incorporating Equipment for Volume and Design for Flow

Inside the production kitchen, the foodservice

AT A GLANCE

Facility: Meals on Wheels of Metro Tulsa

Project Overview: Concept development, project management, owner's representation, foodservice facility design, interior design and operational consulting on a new build that replaced an 8,200-square-foot building with a 28,000-square-foot facility. Highlights include a 10,000-square-foot production kitchen and bulk meal packaging facility

Scope of Work: Site selection and real estate management; bid review and contract management; concept development; construction management; foodservice facility design; equipment specifications; bulk refrigeration design; interior design; furniture, fixture and equipment procurement; operational consulting and owner's representation

Design Consultant and Owner's Representative:

SFG Consulting, Tulsa, Okla.

• Eli Huff, owner

Architects: Selser Schaefer Architects, Tulsa, Okla.

Engineer: Cyntergy, Tulsa, Okla.

Interior Design: Selser Schaefer Architects, Tulsa, Okla.

Dealer/Foodservice Equipment Contractor:

Amundsen Commercial Kitchens, Oklahoma City

Other Key Firms Involved in Project: Meyers-Cherry Construction, Broken Arrow, Okla.

Project Budget: \$10.6 million

Foodservice Equipment Budget: \$1.2 million

design team created a highly efficient system where deliveries come straight off trucks at the loading dock and are rear fed into huge walk-in coolers and freezers that kitchen staff access from the other side without ever having to enter the loading dock. This setup also offers an extra barrier for pests and insects, especially during the warm summer months in Oklahoma. Ultraviolet lights and air curtains also help with pest control. In this area, there's also space for dry goods

right off the loading dock.

Following a somewhat circular design, food then travels from the walk-in coolers and freezers to a prep area with double-sided, ergonomic-friendly prep and refrigerated prep tables. "Right next to that space sits the bakery prep, with huge mixers for making anything from rolls to ranch dressing to mashed potatoes," Huff says.

A series of rolling racks sit near the prep area and the main kitchen area with combi ovens, tilt skillets and other production cooking.

With this setup, Huff says staff can “pull things like big pork shoulders out of the combi onto the racks, shred them and add the barbecue sauce on either side of the kitchen line.”

Staff roll the carts right down the line, collecting all the dish components until they make it to a series of pass-through warmers. They collect the prepped food from the warmers in the packing area (organized as a long line of vacuum-seal packaging machines set up on custom prep tables) so “staff would not have to lean over too far and hurt their backs,” Huff explains.

Staff then package the meals and load the food

right onto receiving trucks. Once the food is loaded, they can then drop all the cooking pans and utensils in the adjacent dish room where these items get loaded into flight-type warewashers. “The space is also equipped with a pressure wash system with ports all over, and everything is waterproof to hose down the carts like a car wash,” Huff adds. Then, the carts are rolled back to the kitchen, and the process starts over.

Huff points to combi ovens as a key piece of equipment in the space.

Four 80-gallon tilt skillets also serve as kitchen work-horses, preparing soups,

stews, sauces and other large batches of food. A series of blast chillers enable staff to quickly freeze large amounts of prepared foods for delivery in refrigerated trucks, akin to a USDA food production plant.

Designing the Front of the House

As the owner’s rep, Huff’s team also oversaw the architecture and construction of the administrative part of the building, which has a separate entrance. A glass wall serves as a partition separating the administrative areas from the kitchen, while allowing guests and tours partial visibility of the culinary action.

“The lobby was designed to be able to be turned into event space for fundraisers,” Huff says.

Other elements in the building include a tornado shelter with a dedicated phone line. (“This is Oklahoma,” Huff says.) There’s also a more fun addition: a bocce ball court for the kitchen and administrative staff in an outdoor break area.

All told, this project took a holistic approach to serving both the needs of others and the health and wellness of employees, volunteers and visitors. Indeed, that remained at the core of the initial plans.

80 YEARS OF SUCCESS



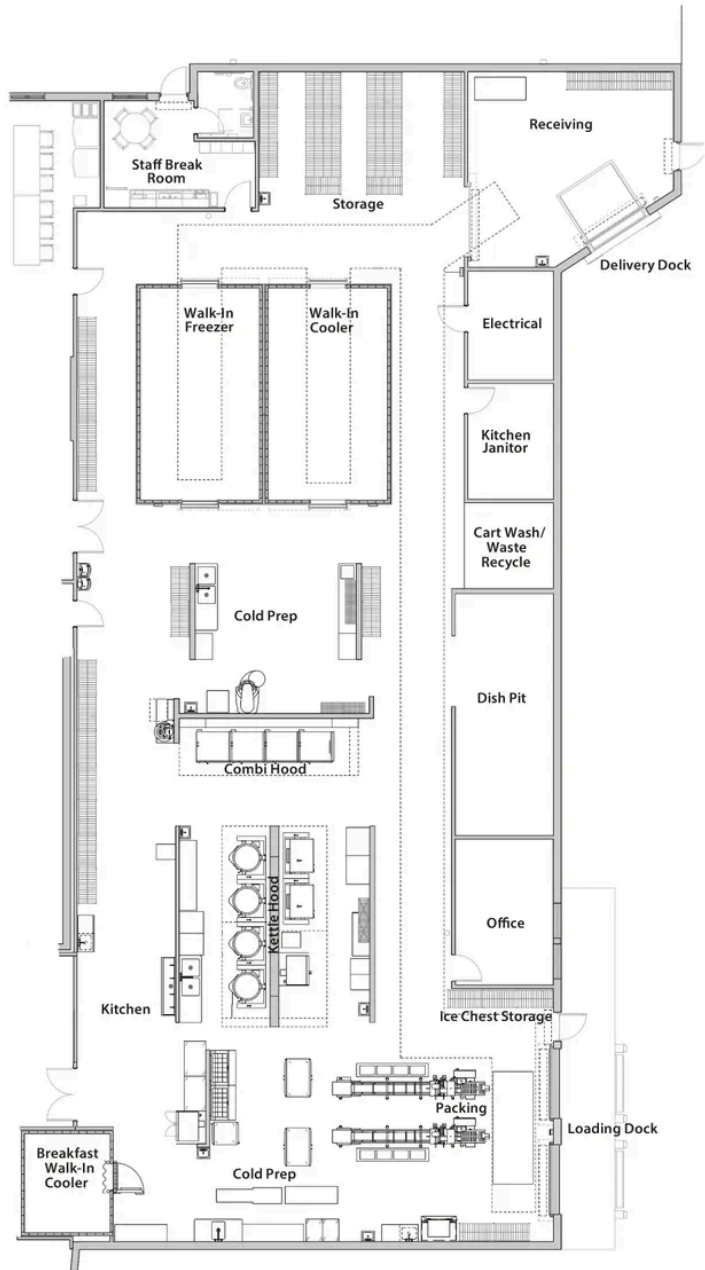
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MEALS ON WHEELS OF METRO TULSA



KEY EQUIPMENT

Receiving/Loading

- Double-sided, pass-through walk-in coolers and freezers

Main Kitchen

- Blast chillers
- Floating island hoods
- Mobile cook and hood cabinets
- Pass-through upright refrigerators
- Roll-in combi ovens
- Thawing cabinets
- Tilt kettles (80 gallons)

Dish Room

- Flight-type dishwasher
- Remote pressurized cleaning system

Packaging Area

- Custom ergonomic prep tables
- High-speed packaging machines

Bakery

- Industrial mixers
- Prep tables

Prep/Cold Prep

- Panini presses
- Refrigerated prep tables
- Upright refrigerators



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