"The U.S. Consulate General in Merida is an important hub for the U.S.-Mexican relationship throughout the Yucatán Peninsula. Since the first Consul in nearby Sisal in 1843, we have worked to promote our shared goals for the peace and prosperity of this region. From the historic influences of the Mayan people to the modern tourism and manufacturing industries, the people of Yucatán, Quintana Roo and Campeche are a vibrant and significant partner for the U.S. Mission in Mexico. Our new campus will be a beacon of our friendship, a showcase of our nations’ cultures, and a center for the exchange of ideas and information that is the core of our diplomatic mission. We look forward to welcoming you to the new campus and using this space for our mutual gain."

COURTNEY BEALE
UNITED STATES CONSUL GENERAL, MÉRIDA
DECEMBER 2020
"The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) is responsible for the spaces in which American diplomats and our partners abroad can work, collaborate, and exchange ideas and initiatives. I am proud that the design of our new Consulate General in Merida will provide a state-of-the-art campus where we can promote our shared economic and trade goals. Whether supporting visa applicants or assisting American citizens, the new Consulate General will be a welcoming, engaging home for our work in the Yucatán. As part of the $1.5 billion the United States has invested in our diplomatic presence in Mexico, Consulate General Merida is one more concrete example of our commitment to the continued advancement of U.S.-Mexico relations."

ADDITION D. “TAD” DAVIS, IV
DIRECTOR, BUREAU OF OVERSEAS BUILDINGS OPERATIONS
DECEMBER 2020
Since 1843, a U.S. Consulate General on the Yucatán Peninsula has served both Mexican and U.S. citizens. In addition to thousands of U.S. citizens who reside in the Consular District, millions of U.S. citizens visit the Yucatán Peninsula annually. The Yucatán attracts a variety of tourists in all seasons: beachcombers on the Riviera Maya, as well as history buffs and art collectors to the colonial cities of Mérida and Valladolid, and explorers to the iconic Mayan ruins of Chichén Itzá and Uxmal.

Mérida and its environs continue to provide an exciting vision for Mexico’s future: a strong regional partner with robust cultural and interpersonal ties presenting extensive opportunities for U.S. investment.
As the political and economic capital of the Mexican State of Yucatán, Mérida reflects the region's rich history and unique geography. Since Mayan times, Mérida's people have been active on the peninsula. In the past few centuries, colonial towns and haciendas attracted visitors and expatriates, but the area's striking natural beauty has remained a consistent source of pride and inspiration. The dry tropical forests and miles of pristine coastline are stunning, while below the surface one can discover the thousands of cenotes, the iconic sinkholes found throughout the peninsula.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, Mérida's economy was largely based on the processing and export of henequen, a fiber resembling sisal. Cultivated in the region's haciendas, the Yucatán Peninsula was one of the largest providers of fibers for twine and rope, creating extensive wealth up to the early 20th century. After the introduction of synthetic fibers, the industry collapsed, but in recent years the area has turned to tourism and manufacturing, booming industries that bring diverse investment from around the world.
The Yucatán Peninsula was the center of the Mayan civilization, associated with some of its most famous archaeological sites: Chichén Itzá, Coba, Tulum, and Uxmal. Stone temples and palaces rise above the trees, visible from miles away. The central ceremonial and administrative areas were surrounded by a vast irregular sprawl of residential complexes. Without rivers and lakes to provide fresh water, these cities relied on cenotes - sinkholes that reveal freshwater in caverns below - and ancient versions of cisterns for fresh water. The Mayan people are well known for their crafts, continuing to this day as masters of textile, pottery, and stone arts.

The largest groups of modern Mayans live in the Yucatán, and approximately 60% of Mérida's current population is of Mayan decent.
Mérida’s historic Centro has evolved over time into a colorful, vibrant city core. Given the tropical climate and colonial influences, buildings with thick, solid walls and limited openings are a common sight from the street. Once inside, visitors discover courtyards with covered spaces that allow residents to live indoors and out. These design strategies maintain a cooler temperature inside the perimeter, with lush gardens and deep overhangs to provide shelter from both sun and rain. With French and Spanish influence, Mérida’s arcades, breezeways, and covered walkways echo a variety of styles, which also influenced the more rural haciendas surrounding the city.

For much of Mérida’s history, the primary trade route - through the port at Progresso rather than overland - favored international trade with Europe. This reinforced the colonial feel of the city, attracting a variety of immigrants from across the world. The city today is home to expatriates from Britain, France, Lebanon, Spain, and the United States among other countries. With a strong community of artists, it has become a hub for galleries and the creative arts, including an active culinary scene.
Over the last century, Mérida has continued to grow in area and population, accommodating the tourism industry while promoting manufacturing. The city has expanded to the north, pushing past the Periférico highway that circles the city. The new U.S. Consulate General campus is situated along two highways for easy access across the region. The seven-acre site is in Via Montejo, which was awarded the best Mixed-Use Development in Mexico in 2019. In addition to attractions such as The Harbor Lifestyle Mall and a large central park, the area features high-rise apartment and office buildings and a medical center.
A symbol of the strong ties between the United States and Mexico, the new campus draws upon the historic Mayan and colonial eras influence through the lens of the region’s rich contemporary culture. The design also brings the best of American engineering and construction techniques, achieving OBO’s mission by creating a safe, secure, and resilient platform for the conduct of American diplomacy. Inspired by the local culture and reflective of the strong connections between the United States and Mérida, the Consulate General will present a welcoming open feel with an ambiance that is restrained, simple, and elegant.
The Yucatán's architectural history and its unique natural environment inspired the landscaping of the site. Stone walls and edging, as well as water troughs, reference the haciendas found in the region. These elements are used to direct visitors around and through the site, creating an accessible and comfortable way to experience the campus. Distinct zones are created on the site, providing outdoor rooms that can be used by the community for outdoor gatherings and formal ceremonies. The water troughs also serve an important function by retaining stormwater on site for gradual release into the ground. Balancing the gardens' orthogonal shapes, areas of dense, tropical vegetation offer a reprieve from the sun and heat.

By combining several buildings into one large structure, the landscape will occupy as much of the site as possible. This and several other structures are clad in an ancient Mayan material called chukum plaster. To make chukum, resin from the locally endemic chukum tree is mixed with traditional limestone plaster to form a finish that is naturally resistant to water infiltration and cracking. Recently rediscovered, this ancient stucco now enjoys widespread use in the region.
FLOATING VOLUME OVER STONE BASE
With stone walls wrapping the first floor and dotting the landscape, the second and third floors appear to float above the site.

OPTIMIZE BUILDING PERFORMANCE
Sunscreen and light monitors reduce solar heat gain and glare in office areas, while maximizing daylight throughout the interior spaces.

GREEN COMMUNITY CORE
A reference to the region’s cenotes, stone walls and landscape extend inside, creating a lush community zone at the core.

FRAME VIEWS OUT
Sunscreen is removed at community spaces to allow unobstructed views where glare is not a concern.
Visitors follow a low site wall to the main building entrance, marked by a water feature that echoes the troughs found at the haciendas outside the city. The site wall continues inside, drawing people into the sunlit, green core of the building.

The glass-clad upper floors extend out over the limestone base to create a shaded walkway around the building. The sunscreen's primary function is to control glare and mitigate solar heat gain, creating comfortable spaces inside while also adding shape to the glass structure.

The resulting effect is reminiscent of the Mayan ruins, which hover above the lush jungle and provide views over the trees across the peninsula.
Inspired by the cenotes dotting the peninsula, the heart of the building is a lush, stone-clad atrium that provides a place for the community to meet while creating the main circulation spine for the building. Hidden inside the building, the core is discovered upon entry, an element of surprise and delight that will be familiar to anyone who has visited a hidden cenote.

The atrium extends from the lobby, past the gallery, and up through the office area — an irresistible stair that will connect the community and create opportunities for chance encounters and visual connections across the building.
RENDERING, CENTRAL STAIR AND ATRIUM
The central stair, atrium and gallery come together on the second level, creating a multi-functional space for formal ceremonies, impromptu meetings, and chance encounters. With views out to the south and into the skylit atrium, the gallery will be full of natural light. The permanent art collection, curated by the Office of Art in Embassies, will feature paintings, textiles, and sculptures by U.S. and Mexican artists with an aim to inspire dialogue and to highlight connections around shared cultural values.
The approach to the Consular Section is clear and direct: stone walls lead visitors to the appropriate entry, framed on the opposite side with a lushly planted garden and shaded outdoor waiting pavilion. Mérida is a busy Consulate General, and the new space provides more service windows to accommodate visitors with a sunlit indoor waiting area finished with durable, yet inviting, materials.
All renderings, contextual and inspirational images, except those listed below, are credited to Miller Hull and team.

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UNITED STATES CONSULATE GENERAL
MÉRIDA, MEXICO

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF OVERSEAS BUILDINGS OPERATIONS

PROJECT STATISTICS

67,000 GSF
7 Acres
Design-Build
$210 Million

SITE AREA
BUDGET

DESIGN CONTRACT AWARD
DESIGN-BUILD CONTRACT AWARD
CONSTRUCTION START
ANTICIPATED COMPLETION

September 2018
September 2019
Summer 2020
2023

SUSTAINABILITY HIGHLIGHTS

Registered LEED V4.1, Gold certification goal
350 KW solar power generation
Native vegetation
Irrigation system with treated greywater
Air-cooled chillers with heat recovery
Local stone cladding
High-efficiency LED lighting
Optimized daylighting controls
High efficiency plumbing fixtures
Remediated brownfield site