



Davis County Memorial Courthouse

Location:
Downtown Farmington, UT

Application:
Government

Install Type:
Historic Retrofit

Products:
Rustic Wood Grain Hybrid FRP Doors (SL-19)

Overview

The Davis County Memorial Courthouse renovation is an award-winning example of historical preservation and modernization. Spearheaded by Hogan & Associates Construction and completed in 2022, this \$9 Million adaptive reuse and seismic retrofit project aimed to return the 20,000-square-foot courthouse to its original 1930s grandeur while ensuring it meets modern safety and accessibility standards.

Key upgrades included demolishing two later additions to create a public plaza that honors the original streetscape and historical monuments, installing ADA-compliant elevators, and complex structural reinforcement involving excavation and stabilization around the original cobble and brick footings.

This was the first courthouse built in the state and now serves as a modern, adaptable office and gathering space for those who work for Davis County.

The project was awarded Restoration Project of the Year by the Associated General Contractors of Utah, Most Outstanding Restoration Project from Utah Construction & Design Magazine, and a Rehabilitation/Restoration Award from Preservation Utah, a local non-profit.

Not long after this extensive renovation was completed, the courthouse's custom-built exterior wood doors became vulnerable. Another solution was needed, one that blended historic appearance with modern durability.



Challenge

Two custom wooden doors were built for the courthouse's exposed southern and western entrances as part of the renovation. While visually striking and consistent with the building's historic style, these handcrafted doors lacked protection from the elements. Within just two years, the unforgiving Utah sun and Mother Nature had taken their toll—splitting the wood, fading the finish, and compromising the integrity of the doors.

Instead of reinvesting in high-cost custom wood doors that had already proven unsustainable, a new solution was needed—one that preserved the courthouse's carefully restored architectural legacy while enduring extreme weather and heavy public use.



The Solution

A long-time contractor for Davis County, recently retired after 38 years in the industry, was brought in to offer a proven alternative. Duff Ellsworth, former owner of Robert I. Merrill Co., a commercial door, frame, and accessory distributor in Salt Lake City, was inspired by previous experience with a custom commercial door manufacturer and another courthouse project – the Unita County Courthouse in nearby Evanston, Wyoming. He proposed using the same proven solution—Special-Lite’s SL-19 Rustic Wood Grain Hybrid FRP Doors.

The ultra-realistic wood grain FRP offered the ideal balance of historical authenticity, modern performance, and exceptional longevity. Designed to replicate the look of traditional oak wood, but with unmatched resistance to moisture, UV degradation, and physical abuse, it addressed all the concerns posed by the failing wood doors.

“No other material looks this close to real wood and lasts this long. FRP just looks better than wood grain hollow metal doors when you get up close—and it performs better, too,” Ellsworth said.

Outcome

The newly installed Hybrid FRP Doors delivered beyond expectations. Seamlessly integrated into the historic façade, they enhanced the building’s visual integrity while ensuring decades of reliable performance—even under direct sun and high-use conditions.

“They love them. It looks great. They couldn’t be happier,” Ellsworth said.

Special-Lite’s Hybrid FRP Doors now stand as a lasting fixture in one of Utah’s most exceptional historic restoration projects—bridging past and present with security, durability, and timeless elegance.