PROJECT CASE STUDY / CITY OF SAN DIEGO · CUSTOM ARCHITECTURAL FENCE

The Piano Fence
City Heights

City Heights Performance Annex · San Diego, California · City of San Diego
Prime Contractor: Swinerton · Work Order 24054129



The piano fence. Nine feet of welded wire in a deep maroon Kynar architectural finish, with perforated vertical inserts stepped to different heights along the run — which is exactly why everyone who worked on it calls it the piano fence.

OWNER
City of San Diego

PRIME
Swinerton

WORK ORDER
24054129 · executed Nov 2025

THE FENCE
9 ft custom "piano" panel

FINISH
Kynar architectural coating

LABOUR
City of San Diego PLA

SOMEBODY HAS TO BUILD THE DRAWING FIRST

The architect designed a fence that does not exist in any catalogue: a nine-foot welded wire field with perforated vertical inserts stepped to different heights along the run, so the whole line reads like a keyboard. **The crew named it the piano fence on day one and the name stuck.**

Nothing about it is orderable. There is no manufacturer's shop drawing, no standard panel, no price book, no distributor to call. Somebody has to work out the frame, the insert widths, the step pattern, the attachment, the weld sequence and the finish — and then **build one and stand it up so the architect and the owner can walk around the real thing** before three hundred feet of it gets committed.

In-Line did that in its own yard in Ramona.

A rendering shows you what it should look like. A sample panel standing in the yard tells you whether it can actually be built, what it weighs, and what it costs. We prefer the second one.

HOW THE PIANO FENCE GOT BUILT

These are the photographs nobody usually sees — the piano fence in raw steel, in our yard, months before it turned maroon.



The piano fence sample panel, full size, standing in the In-Line yard in Ramona before anything went near the site. Raw steel, no coating — built so the design could be approved off the object instead of the drawing.



The same panel, close. Two layers of mesh, perforated inserts set proud of the field, every intersection welded. This is what gets checked before coating — because after the Kynar goes on, changes are expensive.

WHY IT WAS HARD

A custom panel has no supplier to blame

On a catalogue fence, the manufacturer owns the panel and the installer owns the posts. On the piano fence, In-Line owns all of it — design development, shop drawings, the sample, fabrication, coating coordination and installation. There is nobody to point at, which is exactly why an architect hands a design like this to a shop rather than a distributor.

Kynar is not paint

The piano fence and the handrails carry a **Kynar architectural coating** — a fluoropolymer finish applied under controlled conditions, specified on buildings because it holds its colour and gloss for decades under UV. It also means the steel has to be finished, cleaned and prepared to a different standard than a job that ends in enamel, and it means **every dimension has to be right before it ships to coating**, because a field weld afterwards destroys the finish.

That is the same discipline as architectural stainless: get it right in the shop, because there is no touching it up on site.

Nine feet is a structural fence, not just a tall one

A nine-foot welded wire panel carries real wind load and real weight, and the piano inserts add mass high on the panel where it matters most. Post size, footing depth and frame stiffness all move together.

City of San Diego Project Labor Agreement

This job runs under the City's PLA, a different compliance regime from ordinary prevailing wage. In-Line filed the core workforce form, workforce dispatch requests, the pre-job conference form, the **San Diego targeted worker survey** against the qualifying local zip code list, the fringe benefit payment affidavit, drug testing protocol and employee profiles in Prism — plus the SANDAG collective bargaining agreement pre-job form.

WHAT IN-LINE DELIVERED

- **The piano fence** — a custom nine-foot welded wire architectural fence with perforated stepped inserts, taken from architect's concept to buildable shop drawings, sampled, fabricated, coated and installed.
- **Gates** matching the piano panel design.
- **36-inch handrails with Kynar architectural coating.**

- **A full-size sample panel** built in the Ramona shop for architect and owner review before production.
- **Spoils removal at the east-side fencing**, by executed change order, using In-Line's own hydro-vacuum excavation.
- **Outdoor bulletin board installation**, by executed change order.
- **Full PLA labour compliance** — local worker targeting, dispatch, pre-job conference, certified payroll and fringe affidavits.

SCOPE AT A GLANCE

Piano fence | Custom architectural fence | Welded wire panel | Design development | Full-size sample | Kynar coating | Hydro-vacuum excavation | City of San Diego PLA

9 ft
Piano fence panel height

1
Full-size sample built before production

0
Catalogue parts in the design

PLA
City of San Diego labour agreement

City of San Diego · Prime: Swinerton · Work Order 24054129, executed November 2025 · Kynar architectural coating · City of San Diego Project Labor Agreement with targeted local worker reporting · Piano fence designed into shop drawings, sampled, fabricated and coated by In-Line, Ramona.

WHY ARCHITECTS BRING CUSTOM WORK TO IN-LINE

- **We build the sample.** Full size, in real steel, in our own yard — so the decision gets made off the object and not off a render.
- **We do design development, not just installation.** Frame, spacing, attachment, weld sequence and finish sequence, drawn and submitted.

- **We work in architectural finishes.** Kynar, hot-dip galvanizing under paint, #4 brushed stainless, powder coat — and we sequence the work so the finish survives.
- **One shop owns the whole panel.** No manufacturer to wait on, no distributor in the middle, no seam between who drew it and who welded it.

If you have drawn something nobody sells, that is the work we want. **Somebody had to build the first piano fence.**

The City of San Diego, the County of San Diego, the County of Los Angeles, San Diego Unified, Caltrans, SANDAG, MTS, the University of California, the FAA and four branches of the armed services. One standard.

HAVE A PROJECT LIKE THIS?

In-Line Fence & Railing has built fence, railing, and guardrail for Southern California public works, utilities, school districts, and government agencies since 1990.

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