

Northwood Corrections Culinary Services

A strategic rebrand for Canada's corrections foodservice sector — balancing strength with humanity in a sensitive industry

CLIENT

Compass Group Canada

MARKET SIZE

~\$150-250M / year

ROLE

Lead Designer (Sole Creative)

TIMELINE

Sept 2025 – Jan 2026

OVERVIEW

The Challenge

Compass Group Canada needed a new brand identity for their corrections foodservice sector — one that could stand alongside their other business units while respecting the unique sensitivities of the industry.

THE PROBLEM

The existing "Eurest Correctional Services" identity was dated and didn't align with Compass's broader brand portfolio. The sector needed an identity that could project trust and reliability to government clients while honoring the humanity of everyone involved — including the ~30,000-40,000 inmates served daily across Canada.

THE SOLUTION

A bold, nature-inspired identity called "Northwood" that communicates growth, direction, and stability. The brand balances strength with approachability — serious enough for government contracts, human enough to reflect Compass's values of dignity and care.

~35K

INMATES SERVED DAILY

\$200M

EST. ANNUAL MARKET

~1,000

STAFF NATIONWIDE

4+

MONTHS DURATION

Stakeholder Complexity

This project required alignment across multiple internal teams with different priorities:

- ✓ DEI team review & approval
- ✓ Legal compliance review
- ✓ Senior leadership alignment
- ✓ Operations team input
- ✓ Sales & BD requirements
- ✓ Marketing integration

Justin Francisco / Compass Group Canada

Northwood Corrections Culinary Services

Understanding the Landscape

Before designing anything, I needed to understand the unique tensions in this space. The corrections industry faces media scrutiny and public perception challenges — the brand needed to be bold enough to stand alongside those challenges, not hide from them.

Key Insight: Language Matters

Research from stakeholder interviews revealed a core tension: How do we refer to the people we serve? "Inmates" is legally accurate but feels cold. "Residents" (used in some progressive facilities) felt too soft for the realities of the environment.

The solution: A dual-language approach — use "inmates" where legally or contractually required, adopt "residents" in branding and internal culture to demonstrate Compass's values.

Brand Values

Word cloud analysis from stakeholder input revealed the qualities that mattered most:

Primary: Safety, Trust, Human, Service

Secondary: Comfort, Consistency, Flexibility, Experience

The brand needed to project these values without being preachy or naive about the environment.

KEY CONSTRAINT

No "Compass" in the name. Senior leadership wanted the corrections sector to have its own distinct identity — aligned with Compass's other sub-brands (Canteen, Foodbuy, Marquise) but not explicitly tied to the parent name.

Design Principles

Balanced Strength: Mature and confident without being intimidating. Professional authority that remains approachable.

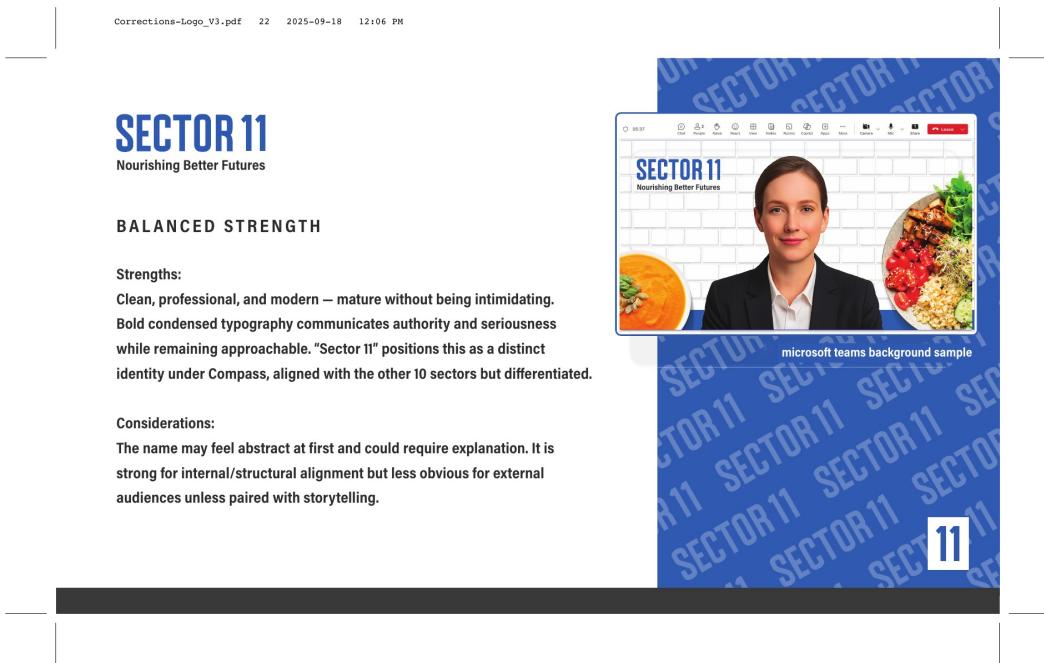
Clean & Text-Driven: After testing icons and graphics, we found that simplicity communicated trust and reliability better than visual complexity.

Scalable & Timeless: The identity needs to work on everything from government RFP documents to staff uniforms to facility signage.

Human-Centered: Despite the institutional context, the brand should honor the dignity of everyone in the system.

Concept 01: Sector 11

My first concept leveraged internal positioning — Corrections is Compass's 11th business sector. "Sector 11" created instant internal recognition while projecting a modern, confident identity.



CUSTOM TYPOGRAPHY

I custom-designed the Sector 11 wordmark — bold condensed letterforms that communicate authority and seriousness while remaining approachable. The geometric forms signal precision and reliability.

Strengths

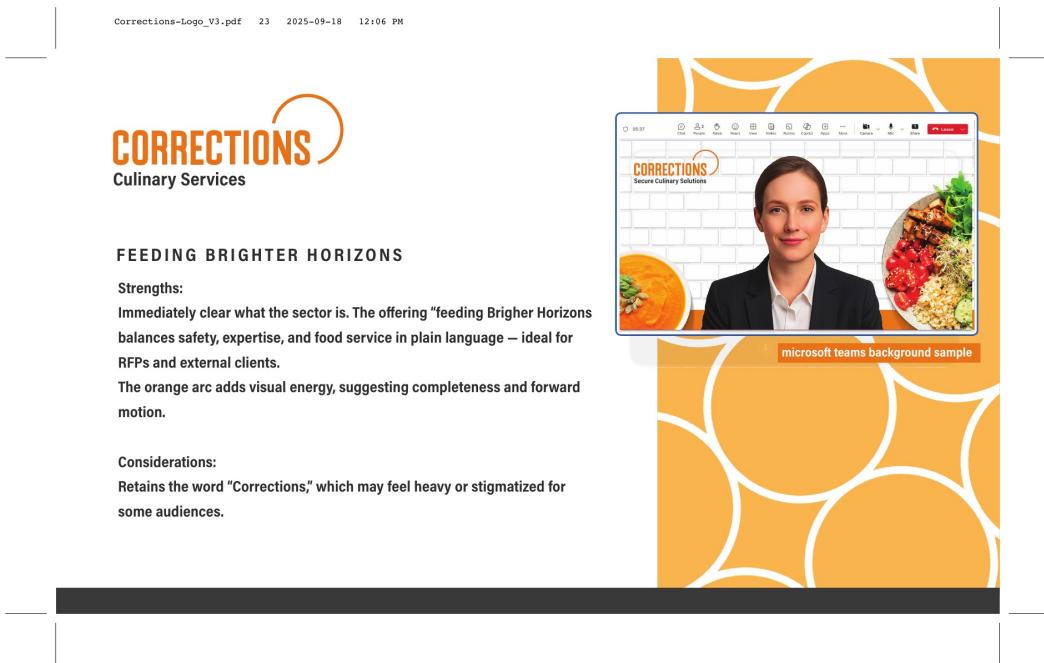
Clean, professional, modern. The name positions Corrections as a distinct but aligned identity within Compass's portfolio. "Nourishing Better Futures" tagline balanced strength with hope.

Considerations

The name felt abstract for external audiences — strong for internal alignment but required storytelling for government clients. Stakeholders wanted something more immediately communicative.

Concept 02: Corrections

The second direction took a more direct approach — keeping "Corrections" in the name for immediate clarity, paired with an orange arc suggesting completeness and forward motion.



Strengths

Immediately clear what the sector is. "Feeding Brighter Horizons" tagline balanced safety, expertise, and food service in plain language — ideal for RFPs and external clients. The orange arc added visual energy.

Considerations

Retaining "Corrections" in the name felt heavy for some stakeholders — the word carries stigma. There was appetite to explore naming that could reframe the sector's perception while remaining honest about the work.

Decision Point: Both Sector 11 and Corrections had merit, but neither fully satisfied all stakeholders. We decided to step back and explore new naming territories that could better thread the needle between strength, clarity, and humanity.

Naming Exploration

With the constraint of no "Compass" in the name, I explored naming directions that could communicate the sector's values through metaphor and meaning.

HOLDFAST
CORRECTIONS
CULINARY SERVICES

Sojourn — A temporary stay, journey. Suggests transition and hope.

SUREPATH EATS
CORRECTIONS CULINARY SERVICES

Holdfast — Steadfast, reliable. Strong but potentially too rigid.

SOJOURN
CORRECTIONS
CULINARY SERVICES

Rootstone — Foundation, grounded. Signals stability and trust.

ROOTSTONE
CORRECTIONS CULINARY SERVICES

Surepath Eats — Direction, certainty. Food-forward positioning.

Evaluation Criteria

Clarity: Can external audiences understand what we do?

Tone: Does it balance strength with humanity?

Distinctiveness: Does it stand out in the Compass portfolio?

Scalability: Does it work across all applications?

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Northwood Emerges

Through stakeholder collaboration, "Northwood" emerged as the strongest naming candidate — a name that communicated direction, growth, and Canadian identity without being literal about the corrections context.



The Rootstone logo presents a strong image of **safety** and **trust**, directly supporting the brand's mission to deliver secure, quality culinary services. The bold, geometric wordmark communicates **leadership** and operational security, while the grounded visual form symbolizes a dependable foundation for consistent, dignified **service**.

Rootstone aligns with the brand's emphasis on **quality** and **leadership**, representing food as both sustenance and structure within a secure environment. Its solid design language reinforces **reliability under pressure**, while the name itself; merging "root" and "stone" embodies the steady, enduring character of a team that feeds with integrity and precision.



The Northwood logo captures **direction**, **growth** and **renewal**, aligning closely with correction's foundational roots (like a tree) in safety and quality, leading to dependable and accountable partnerships built on **trust**, that strengthens as it grows (like the trunk of a tree). The upward tree and fork symbol represent both guidance and the vast geographical locations we serve ("north"), and nourishment ("wood"), merging **culinary excellence** with a sense of purpose and progress.

The structured green palette and vertical form convey **stability**, **safety** and **trust**, showing strength within an environment of control and order. Northwood communicates the brand's forward-looking ambition; to be a trusted leader in correctional culinary services — by combining humanity and structure in a simple, confident visual identity.



Why Northwood?

"North" — Direction, guidance, the vast geographical locations we serve across Canada.

"Wood" — Nourishment, growth, natural strength. The tree as metaphor for rootedness and upward progress.

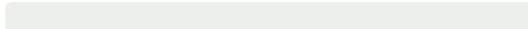
The Tree/Fork Icon

I designed a custom mark combining an abstracted pine tree with a subtle fork integrated into the trunk — merging the concepts of growth, direction, and culinary service into a single distinctive symbol.

PROCESS

Color Refinement

With the naming and icon direction approved, I moved into color refinement — testing saturation and brightness levels to find the right balance of authority and approachability.



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+saturation



+saturation & brightness



+saturation -brightness



Final Selection: The middle-saturation green was selected — vibrant enough to feel alive and forward-looking, but deep enough to communicate stability and trust. The structured green palette conveys safety and reliability within an environment of control and order.

Final Identity

The approved Northwood identity combines custom typography with the tree/fork icon — a mark that communicates growth, direction, and culinary excellence in a single, scalable system.



Tree Form: Abstracted pine tree communicates growth, renewal, and northern Canadian identity

Fork Integration: Culinary service embedded in the trunk — food as the foundation of what we do

Upward Direction: Vertical emphasis signals progress, aspiration, and forward motion

Green Palette: Stability, safety, trust — strength within an environment of control

Compass Brand Portfolio

Northwood now sits alongside Compass Group's other sub-brands — each with distinct identity while sharing a family resemblance in quality and professionalism.

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Portfolio Positioning: Northwood joins Canteen, Foodbuy, Marquise Hospitality, Compass One Healthcare, and others as a distinct sector brand. The identity is strong enough to stand alone in RFPs and client presentations while clearly belonging to the Compass family.

RESULTS

Impact & Outcome

The Northwood identity was approved after 4+ months of stakeholder alignment, DEI review, and legal compliance — and is now pending national rollout across Compass Group Canada's corrections operations.

Status: Approved and pending rollout. The brand will be implemented across all corrections sector touchpoints — from RFP materials to staff uniforms to facility signage.

What I Delivered

- ✓ Complete naming strategy & exploration
- ✓ Custom typography (Sector 11)
- ✓ Original tree/fork icon design
- ✓ Multiple concept directions
- ✓ Color system development
- ✓ Stakeholder presentations
- ✓ Teams background templates
- ✓ Brand rationale documentation

The Challenge

Navigating DEI, legal, and multi-level management approval while maintaining creative vision. This wasn't about making something look good — it was about building consensus across teams with different priorities while honoring the sensitivity of the corrections environment.

The Achievement

A brand identity that stands boldly alongside the brave men and women who work in this sector. Not hiding from the reality of corrections, but reframing the conversation around growth, nourishment, and human dignity.

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