

Fremont/Dodge County/911 Communications Joint Law Enforcement Center Project Information and Discussion

WHY THE NEED

Insufficient Space

When studying the facility space that houses the Fremont Police, Dodge County Sheriff, and PSAP; combined, they currently occupy 30,829 square feet of space in two separate facilities. A determination of their total facility space needs would require 53,316 square feet if they were to continue their operations in separate facilities. Given this, **the two existing facilities provide only 58% of the required space** for law enforcement operations.

Dysfunctional Space Impedes Operational Efficiency

Poor placement of rooms that support various tasks negatively impacts the efficient flow of people and materials. How and where an officer can interact with a citizen or other staff members, and how evidence is moved into and out of the building are just two examples of the current problems.

Poor Control Over the Physical Environment

Law enforcement facilities - by their nature - must restrict and separate movement in the building. At the same time, building codes require free egress under emergency situations. The current facilities lack the appropriate access controls and monitoring required of modern law enforcement facilities.

Outdated Technological Infrastructure

Inability to Meet Ongoing Training/Preparation Demands

There is insufficient classroom space to readily support regular, routine in-service lecture format training. Space is non-existent for training in proper defensive tactics, and judgment training simulation.

Lack of Conformance to Codes for Critical Use Facilities

Law enforcement buildings are considered "Critical Use facilities" by code and require conformance to more stringent design requirements. Designed under current codes, they are required to stand up to greater natural forces such as wind and earthquake. The intent is to keep the building operational and the occupants safe while they are required to continue operations under extreme conditions. The current facilities fall far short of these standards.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS TO ADDRESSING FACILITY NEEDS?

Improved Delivery of Public Safety Services

Most individuals remain in the community they call home or seek a new community home based on "quality of life issues". Good jobs, affordable housing, quality schools, sufficient amenities, and low cost of living. But nothing is more important than safety. Community safety is achieved in large part based on the performance of the local law enforcement departments.

While we can easily visualize the importance of the patrol car, lights and siren, and the uniform to the job of policing, there is no more important component to the delivery of public safety services than the law enforcement building. The building is where all the preparation and equipping of the officers on the street occurs. Both long term planning and daily preparation. The communication that allows an officer to respond to trouble is all routed through the building. The building is critical to the accumulation, processing, and disposition of evidence mandatory to the success of crime prosecution. And the

building serves as a safe place for all to interact with public safety personnel as well as others.

Improved Department / Citizen Interaction

Modern facilities are designed with space to support public group interaction with their public safety department. From Neighbor Watch Groups to Citizen Police Academies, these interactions form the bonds and have been shown to advance public safety in a community.

Increased Operational Efficiency

Proper design of new facilities will maximize the operational efficiency for all staff conducting operations in the building by minimizing down time waiting for space to become available to perform certain tasks such as conducting interviews, staff meetings, reviewing evidence, etc. Appropriate space layouts improve staff work productivity by promoting personnel interaction through design and creating space within the building for storage items required to be close at hand.

Reduced Liability

Proper facilities can promote an increased level of in-service training maximizing the skills of department personnel and minimizing liability to the City based on the interaction occurring between staff and citizens. Through good building design we can provide the appropriate level of controlled interaction between the department staff and citizens, whether the citizen is a victim or hostile. Appropriately designed, the building can protect confidential information and physical evidence that flows through the building.

Community, Department, Officer Pride

Public buildings are a reflection of the dignity and values within our communities. Appropriately designed to strike a balance between aesthetics and value, they can, and should instill pride in the citizens, leaders, and personnel that will work out of the facility. Historically, the pride officers feel in a facility that enhances their job, and the support they feel from a community that supports them, results in better personnel retention and hiring.

A PROCESS LONG IN THE MAKING

Getting to this point has been a long time in the making. Decisions have not been sudden. Consideration has been careful. Though the earliest recognition of the need for new facilities certainly came much earlier, open discussion and consideration by elected officials began in 2013. In 2018 Dodge County entered into the equation and a formal study was conducted to assess the needs of a joint City/County project.

WHAT WE KNOW (PROJECT FINDINGS)

The best long-term value will be reflected in the development of a facility of new construction that supports the Fremont Police, Dodge County Sheriff, and Dodge County PSAP/Dispatch in a single shared building. The proposed development will meet the needs of these departments for the next twenty-years. Further, in the future when the next generation is called upon to meet any increased demand on the law enforcement facility, the proposed site for development has the capacity to support an extensive expansion of the proposed facility.

In law enforcement facilities, two primary factors typically drive the need for new, or different buildings. The deficient condition of the building, and insufficient space to perform all the required operations. The condition of the building's structure, systems, and components can generally – given sufficient dollars - be renovated or replaced to achieve an acceptable performance level. An expansion of the existing facility can create the necessary space, but this requires that the site has enough room to

accommodate the building expansion and still provide the necessary parking required. The existing building also must be able to accommodate the new expansion in a functional manner.

It has been determined that combining City and County law enforcement departments along with PSAP in one joint use building - versus renovating and expanding their two existing facilities - will result in a savings of over 10,000 square feet of space. Instead of the 53,316 square feet that would be required to meet the needs for two separate facilities, the proposed facility requires 42,980 square feet of space.

Considering a renovation of the two existing law enforcement buildings, a required expansion of both buildings, along with a total renovation to improve the condition of both buildings, a new joint-use law enforcement building represents the most cost effective way to meet these vital public safety facility needs.

A 17,390 square foot parking garage is in addition to the main building and exclusively dedicated for the parking use and protection of department fleet vehicles. Initial planning will consider the use of a metal pre-engineered building to lower costs.

Preliminary construction cost estimates for the above facilities is approximately 18 million dollars.

WHY NOW

The need has never been greater. The job has never been more difficult. A joint Fremont/Dodge Law Enforcement Center will provide the community with the edge to meet these challenges by putting the best equipped, best trained officer on the job.

Ten percent of the building is geared towards training. Classroom lecture training, defensive tactics, and advanced scenario simulation training. Continuing training improves every encounter an officer has with a citizen and reduces liability to the department and community.

A community's support of its public safety department by providing the appropriate tools a department needs, and the quality of the facility they operate out of definitively increases officer morale. This leads to a better overall public safety department by attracting quality candidates and retention of the department's best personnel.

This critical community facility need will not go away. If not addressed now, it will be left to our children to deal with an even greater problem. With almost clock like precision, building construction costs increase year after year at an average of 3-5%. The best price for constructing a project is almost always going to be "as soon as possible". And we are seeing some of the lowest financing costs in history. Many contractors believe the spring of 2021 will see some of the most competitive pricing we've seen in years due to some level of uncertainty along with the likelihood of a rapidly improving economy late in 2020 and early in 2021.