

Lawrence Police Facility FAQ

Why is a police facility needed?

The City of Lawrence has grown significantly since 1976 when the original downtown Law Enforcement Center (LEC) was built and occupied, in part, by the Lawrence Police Department. As the department grew to meet the service needs of the community, it outgrew its space at the LEC. For the past 38 years, personnel, equipment, and evidence were disbursed across six different geographical locations within the City.

Placing patrol, investigations, administration, evidence, records, critical response equipment, and animal and parking control under one roof will significantly increase the communication, interaction, collaboration, and cohesiveness of internal department divisions. This in turn will ensure the department will best be able to accomplish the mission of continuing to serve the community in the most effective, efficient, and community oriented manner possible. A new facility will:

- Help address current and future public safety needs of the community.
- Improve the interdepartmental communication and work flow.
- Increase efficiency and effectiveness by consolidating multiple locations.
- Provide a secure environment for the public and department personnel.
- Increase public access, parking, and one-stop shopping for police services.
- Incorporate a safe and visitor friendly design which is welcoming to citizens.
- Safeguard citizen privacy during interactions with department members.
- Improve working conditions for employees interacting with citizens.
- Better integrate law enforcement technology.
- Aid in meeting operational and long-term storage requirements.
- Provide workspace flexibility and expandability.
- Provide for the protection and longevity of equipment and vehicles.
- Maximize the efficiency, effectiveness, and productivity of department members leading to the public getting more service from every payroll dollar.

How does a new building help keep the community safe?

The building a police department is housed in is its biggest piece of equipment and is utilized around the clock, every day of the week. As a tool, the building provides a police department what it needs to be able to serve the community in an efficient, productive, and effective manner. A new facility will lead to:

- Solving more crime due to increased information sharing between patrol and investigations.
- Room for additional personnel required for increased investigation of crimes.
- Quicker access to and response with life-saving equipment.
- Improved training spaces for best practices officer training and preparedness.
- Increased patrol and investigatory time and less travel time between facility locations.
- Improved and more efficient evidence processing capabilities.
- Improved community event and critical incident management capability.
- A work environment conducive to employee wellness and productivity.
- Increased opportunities for Community Oriented Policing efforts.
- Increased community crime prevention educational opportunities.
- High morale leading to recruitment and retention of the best officers.

Why don't we renovate the existing spaces instead of building a new facility?

Consideration of adjacencies in police facility design ensures that things that need to be next to each other within the facility are; and that some things that should not be close together are not. Having patrol sergeant offices in close proximity to the patrol squad room which in turn is close to the locker room are examples of functions that should be close together. Another example would be the desire to have the evidence intake room next to the evidence processing room. Both of these areas should then also be accessible from a secure garage or building exterior to facilitate large item processing (to include vehicles). Having crime victims and suspects waiting in common lobby would be an example of things that should not be close together. Not having public restrooms situated within the facility's secure or sensitive areas are other examples.

To meet the needs of a purpose built police facility that incorporates adjacency concepts as well as other function specific design elements, new construction enjoys many advantages. The largest amount of space currently occupied by the department is within a converted lab and office building. The costs of remodeling this and other existing structures that were never envisioned as a public safety facility may approach or exceed new construction costs without the functionality and efficiency advantages realized with new construction. Existing building design, location, growth potential, and mechanical deficiencies would also need to be addressed, further increasing the costs. None of the current facility locations have sufficient space or are suitable for expansion or remodeling. A new single facility will:

- Ensure adequate land and structure space for current and future needs.
- Address safety, security, confidentiality, productivity, and service concerns.
- Incorporate design elements and use needs specific to public safety.
- Allow for opportunities for energy and environmental efficiency in design.
- Maximize the benefit of co-location of all the department's functions.

Isn't it better to have multiple locations or sub-stations?

Generally, until a community reaches a population of approximately 250,000 residents, it is better served by a single combined services police building. Past this point, the precinct model can be adopted. In the precinct model, most police department functions are duplicated at each location. This creates full functioning "mini" police departments responsible for each geographically defined area of a city. Each location would have a patrol function, investigations, administration, training, etc. Effectiveness, communication, and interdivision interaction benefits would be realized at each location. The City of Lawrence is not yet at the size that would make this model cost effective. Sub-stations or "storefront" police presence would be an excellent Community Policing concept to incorporate after first addressing the overarching need for a modern and centralized services police facility.

Why is a police facility so expensive?

The cost of constructing a police facility is often compared to the cost of constructing an office building of similar size. Police facilities have specific functional, security, material durability, longevity, weather event survivability, storage, and mechanical system infrastructure needs that often produce a higher finished cost as compared to other types of buildings. Police facilities are also occupied and utilized around the clock, every day of the year. Comparing estimated police facility construction costs to other finished police facility projects of similar scope and size is a one method to determine the accuracy of the projected costs. The objective in the construction of a new police facility will be to provide an acceptable and functional building with consideration for future growth without unnecessary extravagance.

What are the consequences of not building a new police facility?

The existing facilities are not sufficient to efficiently carry out the mission of the Lawrence Police Department. Consequences of not undertaking this project at this time include falling further behind in the department's preparedness to effectively and efficiently meet the service needs of the community. Current facilities have multiple significant deficiencies and are undersized by 62% - less than half the space the department needs at the present time. The department cannot add additional personnel or equipment to meet current or long-term service demands. Projected future space needs would exasperate the situation.