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## Big compromise allows East Patrol crime lab project to move forward

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Kansas City's much-debated new crime lab will be smaller than originally promised but bigger than the downsized version that critics had feared.

The Kansas City Police Board and city officials announced that compromise Thursday, ending a weeks-long dispute over the new East Patrol police station/crime lab campus to be built in the vicinity of 27th Street and Prospect Avenue.

The breakthrough allows the project to move forward, and construction on the police station could start as soon as October. The entire project is expected to be finished in the fall of 2015.

The compromise keeps the East Patrol police station/crime lab campus within the budget that the city most recently had proposed. But it calls for a somewhat larger lab than city planners had recently envisioned, helped by a creative redesign that police supported.

"I think it's a fair solution," said outgoing Police Board President Lisa Pelofsky, who has worked hard on the crime lab issue. "We're going to continue working toward some redesign that might add even more space. We're pretty darn close."

As a result of the compromise, the City Council on Thursday unanimously approved a \$78 million bond package that includes \$14 million to deal with East Patrol's serious cost overruns.

The city had already sold \$60 million in bonds for the East Patrol project, to be paid for with a quarter-cent public safety sales tax that voters approved in 2010.

But in July, city officials acknowledged that the original budget seriously underestimated costs for land acquisition, design, furnishings and equipment. With those costs built in, the budget skyrocketed to an estimated \$74 million.

Even with that increase, designers said the crime lab would have to be downsized from the original plan of 71,000 square feet to 54,000 square feet. Crime prevention advocates howled, saying that violated the promise to build a state-of-the-art lab for future needs. But the city said a lab of that size would cost \$7 million more, and the sales tax wouldn't generate that much revenue.

In recent weeks, police and city finance analysts scrambled to find a solution.

Pelofsky had hoped to identify grants or other money to pay for the bigger lab. But she said Thursday that she couldn't find enough new money, given federal funding cuts and other constraints. She said new design ideas should get the lab closer to the desired size.

Pat Klein, assistant city manager and East Patrol project manager, told the council that designers believe they can expand the lab size to between 56,000 and 60,000 square feet by taking space from an adjacent evidence storage area and through other adjustments. No matter what, it will be an improvement over the current 31,000-square-foot lab.

The East Patrol project has been challenging almost from its inception. The selected site, bounded by 26th and 27th streets, from Brooklyn to Prospect avenues, required the acquisition of 128 parcels and the relocation of about 60 residents. Some protested the loss of their homes and held up their land sales until they got court judgments.

But just before Thursday's vote, Mayor Sly James said the lab will still be very good, and the \$74 million investment represents one of the largest city investments ever on the East Side. He said the new campus should be a transformative, "watershed" development for the area.

While East Patrol is the biggest component of the bond package, other funds will go for the East Village development east of City Hall, a new Soccer Village in Swope Park, and for improvements to Municipal Auditorium, City Market and Columbus Park.

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