

KC picks land near KCI for new North Patrol police station

BY LUKE RANKER - SPECIAL TO THE STAR
07/10/2014 3:11 PM | Updated: 07/15/2014 10:38 AM



Construction on a new Northland police station will begin sometime next year on property at Vienna Road and Northwest Prairie View Road, near the Kansas City International Airport. The property offers visibility and easy access, which are important for a police station. The new station would nearly double the size of the current facility at 1001 N.W. Barry Road and offer a community room, public restroom and a better detention center. FILE PHOTO BY JILL TOYOSHIBA/THE KANSAS CITY STAR

Kansas City has selected land for a new Northland police station, which would be the final piece of the city's multimillion-dollar public safety improvement campaign.

Construction will begin sometime next year on property at Vienna Road and Northwest Prairie View Road, near the Kansas City International Airport. The property offers visibility and easy access, which are important for a police station, said city architect Eric Bosch. The new station would nearly double the size of the current facility at 1001 N.W. Barry Road and offer a community room, public restroom and an better detention center.

In May the city approved using the remaining revenue from a quarter-cent public safety sales tax to build a new North Patrol station. The citywide project to improve aging patrol stations began in 2002, when Kansas City voters approved the sales tax. The tax raised about \$127,635,000 for renovations at the South Patrol, Shoal Creek and Metro Patrol stations, a police training academy and phase one of remodeling police headquarters, as well as upgrading computer systems.

In 2010, voters renewed the tax to raise more money for a new East Patrol campus with headquarters and a crime lab, and a new North Patrol station. The tax has raised nearly \$100 million since the renewal.

The new North Patrol station is still in the early stages of development and no design has been determined. Bosch hopes the design is unique and stands out.

"The current station is such an icon, maybe because of its yellow paint," he said "We want use architecture to make sure it's prominent."

Officials say visibility is important for a police station because it gives residents a sense of security. Bosch said the new station would be easily visible from Interstate 29 and the surrounding area. Being close to the interstate also gives officers and the public easy access to the station.

To select the site, Bosch said maps of city property were compared with crime density maps. The airport owns the land, so Bosch said the city did not have to purchase the property. That could mean \$1 million to \$3 million in savings. And the property is large enough for the new station to expand if necessary as the Northland grows, Bosch said, which would be easier than building a second station.

In April, the City Council awarded Treanor Architects the design bid for \$791,500. Andy Pitts, a principal architect with the Kansas City-based firm, said his division specializes in designing law enforcement buildings. The firm has designed several buildings in the metro area, including an expansion to a station in Blue Springs and the remodeled station in Lee's Summit, but Pitts said this is the first time Treanor has worked with the Kansas City Police Department.

Bosch said his department, Treanor and the Police Department will hold frequent meetings to work through interior designs before designing the exterior.

Back in May, Major Roger Lewis, division commander for North Patrol, said it was unlikely his patrol would add additional officers, but operating out of a modern station will improve police functions.

The current building, affectionately called the bumblebee station because of its yellow exterior, was built in 1976, and officials say it has structural problems including leaking roofs, sewer and HVAC trouble, no emergency generator and electrical issues. None of that immediately affects public safety or security, but it creates a hassle for officers and support staff, Lewis said. For instance, the building's electrical system can't handle modern power needs. If someone wants to use the microwave in the small break room, they first have to unplug the coffee pot.

"Because you'll blow a fuse," Lewis said in May. "And with all the computers, we really can't afford to be doing that."

The current 12,000-square foot building was not designed to handle the 95 officers in North Patrol. Officers are usually only at the station at the beginning or end of a shift. During those times the station becomes overly crowded and inefficient. Officials said the new 20,000-square foot building would give officers plenty of space to work.

Bosch said Kansas City plans to work with community groups in the neighborhood like Boy Scout troops, churches or committees that might want to use the public space in the station. Public events are also an option. He said the Police Department has held community barbecues at the East Patrol station. Because most suspects taken to a suburban station like Shoal Creek or North Patrol are bonded out quickly or sent to a larger facility, the stations can operate less like a traditional jail and more like a community center.

"We don't really build jails anymore," he said.