

After years of planning, new East Patrol police station opens in KC

HIGHLIGHTS

The patrol division at 27th and Prospect, which has 129 officers, opens for operation at 6 a.m. Saturday.

There will be a grand opening for the public Dec. 1.

Money for the \$74 million project came from the city's quarter-cent public safety sales tax and bond sales.



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Pottery thrown by local residents helps make up a sculpture by Des Moines artist David Dahlquist that sits in front of the new East Patrol police station at 2640 Prospect Avenue. On Monday, Nov. 9, 2015, painter Bill Jones of Color, Inc., added another coat of paint to parts of the metalwork. **Keith Myers** - kmyers@kcstar.com

BY GLENN E. RICE
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The Rev. John Modest Miles soon will see large numbers of police cars, swirling lights and blue uniformed officers frequent the corner of 27th Street and Prospect Avenue.

But this time, in a good way.

The new East Patrol Division at 2640 Prospect Ave. is located where brazen drug dealers and prostitutes once operated in the open. Back then, the floor in a nearby abandoned building, thick with used drug needles and crack pipes, was too dangerous to walk on while wearing thin-soled shoes.

“It’s like a dream that I am trying to waking up from,” said Miles,

the longtime senior pastor of Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church, across the street from the police campus.

“It is one of the most blessed things that could happen to this community. I am convinced that it is going to spark the rebirth of the whole community. I just have to say, thank you Jesus.”

The patrol division, which has 129 officers, opens for operation at 6 a.m. Saturday. The old station at 5301 E. 27th Street closed Thursday.

Get a first look inside the new East Patrol police station and crime lab

The new Kansas City East Patrol police station is nearing completion at 27th Street and Prospect Avenue. It features a community room, computer lab and gymnasium for use by the public. Construction of the adjacent Kansas City Regional Crime Lab is not far behind.

Construction of a new regional crime lab adjacent to the new East Patrol building is in the final stages. It is expected to open in early next year.

The grand opening for the 118,000-square-foot campus named in honor of slain civil rights leader Leon Mercer Jordan is set for Dec. 1. At that time, the public can tour the facility, which includes a community room, a spacious gymnasium and a computer lab open to the public.

Money for the \$74 million project came from the city’s quarter-cent public safety sales tax and bond sales. Initially, the construction project carried a \$57 million price tag as part one of the projects used to convince voters in 2010 to renew the public safety sales tax. But that amount was a rough estimate that underestimated the costs of land, design and furnishings.

As a result, the cost ballooned and some aspects of the project were scaled back. It took about two years to build.

“Our department members and the community deserves this facility,” said Kansas City Police Chief Darryl Forté. “The East Patrol Division station offers a physical space where we can continue strengthening community relationships and partnerships

“It’s not just a police station. It’s a place where people can gather. Where they can do homework, play a game of basketball or have a neighborhood meeting in a safe and supportive environment.”

The project, bounded by 26th and 27th streets, from Brooklyn to Prospect avenues, gobbled up 126 parcels and required relocating about 60 residents. That generated resentment from some activists and residents who questioned the logic of uprooting stable families. Others complained that the development was built way out of scale to the neighborhood.

It took more than a year to acquire the land because some property owners went to court to challenge how much they were paid.

Area homes were constructed between 1902 and 1972, and roughly about 90 homes were either burned out, significantly dilapidated or otherwise abandoned.

The new campus sits among more homes from that era.

“We wanted to make sure the architecture blended with the neighborhood; that was one of the reasons for making it a one-story facility,” said City Architect Eric Bosch.

The patrol division faces Prospect Avenue but its entrance is on 27th Street on the south.

The walkway leading to the building is highlighted by multicolored ceramic art created by neighborhood children and residents, features a floral cover and is adorned with poetry.

The exterior walls of the patrol division feature bricks re-purposed from the houses and other structures demolished to make way for the new facility.

Inside, the atrium offers a 19-foot high ceiling and a large open space that will be used a gathering spot for those using the community room, computer lab or the gymnasium.

The entrance is accented by granite polished floors, ceiling-to-floor glass walls and large windows that utilize natural light. A plaque with the names of residents whose properties were purchased for the new patrol division will be stationed on a wall near the front door.

Police officials designed the flow of the 40,500-square-foot patrol division in tune with how officers do their jobs. The north-end parking lot provides easy access to the roll call room, locker room, workout facility and detention holding cells.

It marks a huge improvement for the people who will work there.

“The old station is outdated; the mechanical systems are poor; the finishes have deteriorated,” said Maj. Sharon Laningham, who oversees the police department’s construction division.

The old facility at 5301 E. 27th St. was not built as a police station, but a radio station for dispatching police and city crews. Over the years, the building has been remodeled and retrofitted to meets the needs of the patrol division.

The new East Patrol building offers a computer lab open to area schoolchildren, families and others who do not have home computers or Internet access. The gymnasium, with a full-size basketball court, is expected to be used by residents and neighborhood groups as well as other department-related activities.

A wall in the community room contains wood harvested from 150 trees cleared from the construction site. The wood, which came from nine different tree species, was converted into a mosaic wall feature.

The room's opposite wall will highlight the history of African-American police officers. A section is dedicated to the life of Leon Jordan, a pioneering black detective on the Kansas City Police Department in the 1950s who co-founded the African-American political club Freedom Inc. in 1962.

Jordan also served three terms in the Missouri House and was running for a fourth term when he was killed in 1970 outside the Green Duck Lounge and Grill, his Prospect Avenue tavern. That tavern sits just north of the East Patrol campus.

African-American community leaders launched an aggressive campaign to have the new patrol division named in honor of Jordan. Some argued that Kansas City police stations traditionally are named for their geographic location, and many people, including Mayor Sly James, thought the city should continue that practice. Eventually, the Kansas City Council settled on a compromise by Councilman Jermaine Reed, who suggested naming the entire campus after Jordan.

The new crime lab, property and evidence facility will be in an adjacent building at 2645 Brooklyn Ave. The 50,000 square-foot crime lab will feature state-of-the-art equipment, crime scene reconstruction rooms, and evidence storage space. It will replace the lab at 66th Street and Troost Avenue, which officials say is small and antiquated. The new space, meanwhile, runs about the length of a football field.

The crime lab is one of only seven labs in the country to be accredited in eight disciplines by the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors - Laboratory Accreditation Board.

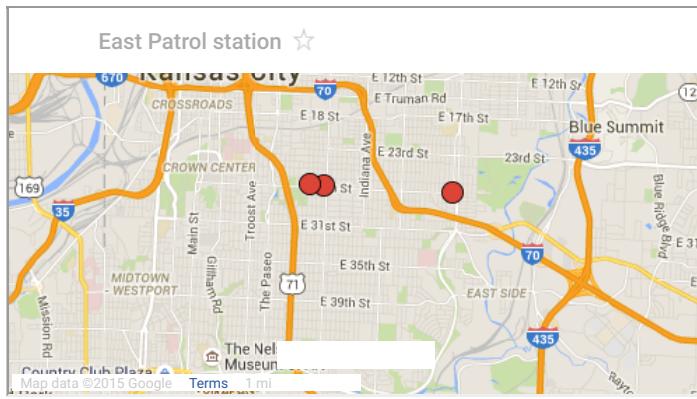
"They do excellent work, but they, too, have been crammed into a retrofitted building that isn't suitable for their work or for housing the delicate equipment and evidence they deal with," Forté said. "Now they will be able to work in a space that is designed just for what they do."

The new campus is expected to spur development along the Prospect Avenue corridor, including expanded bus service, a new grocery store at Linwood Boulevard and a \$3.6 million youth and family center being built by Morning Star church.

As an 11-year-old child, Reed watched open corner drug sales and working prostitutes while waiting to catch the bus.

"I remember thinking that my community should not look like this," said Reed, whose family once lived at 27th Street and

Mongtall Avenue. "My community should look better, my community deserves better."



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