



Legislation Text

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Feasibility Study for Potential Criminal Justice Center Headquarters in Northern Range

Purpose

In early 2022, City Council directed staff to begin the process of exploring an expansion of our current criminal justice facilities to include a new facility - either a central police headquarters or substations - in the Northern Range to help improve response times. Following that direction, staff began the process of contracting for a feasibility study to begin to understand the needs, scope, scale, and estimated costs for a potential facility. In this presentation tonight, staff and the City's architectural consultants HOK will report on the findings of that study. Immediately following the presentations by staff and HOK and any Council questions, comments, or concerns about the findings, Council will adjourn to executive session with staff and HOK for Council to give direction about the acquisition of real property for this facility.

Background and Need

Commerce City has seen unprecedented growth on the Northern Range of the City. With this growth comes increased pressures on City services, particularly for public safety and the Commerce City Police Department (CCPD). Currently, nearly all of the Police Department's sworn staff utilize the Civic Center as a headquarters with limited numbers of officers using a small substation in Reunion to cover the Northern Range. Because of this distribution, CCPD has previously expressed concern over their ability to quickly and effectively respond to service calls in the Northern Range.

CCPD is currently allocated around 160 full-time sworn staff. With growth projections expecting the City to hit near 100,000 residents by the end of the decade, CCPD estimates staff needs to nearly double to more than 300 sworn staff in that timeframe. CCPD staff have expressed concern that the existing space they occupy within the Civic Center is not large enough to safely and comfortably accommodate their existing staff, let alone future staff projections. The growth of the staffing needs alone would justify an expanded Criminal Justice facility.

Geography also plays a major role in the CCPD's ability to respond to service calls in the Northern Range. CCPD has seen an increase in calls in the Northern Range, requiring them to commute more than 15 minutes to cover the 6 miles from the Civic Center Police headquarters up Highway 2 to at least 96th Avenue. With traffic, their ability to respond to incidents in the Northern Range is severely limited by the commute. During the Winter, snow drifts can make commuting up Highway 2 difficult and crossing the 96th Avenue corridor impassable. Locating a Criminal Justice facility in the Northern Range increases the Police Department's to more effectively serve the Northern Range communities.

Feasibility Study

Following Council's direction, staff began the process of exploring a potential Criminal Justice facility expansion in the Northern Range. The first step of this process is a Feasibility Study, which allows staff and Council to completely understand the needs of CCPD and Municipal Courts staff, outline the minimum space requirements for such a facility, and begin to identify potential locations and properties. A discussion of the first two components of the study, the facility size and space requirements, will occur in public; a discussion of potential locations and properties will occur in executive session to allow Council the opportunity to give staff direction regarding potential property acquisition.

Facility Size

It was critical for HOK to begin with the needs of staff because up until this point, there was not a complete understanding of the size and scope of a potential facility. The size and scope would help inform City leadership about what type of facility should be pursued: either one (or multiple) police substations to house CCPD officers, or a larger police headquarters facility.

As HOK began engaging with staff, it became abundantly clear that staff needs far exceeded the space that multiple substations would accommodate. Pursuing a larger criminal justice center/police headquarters comes with numerous benefits.

The first benefit is that a larger facility better accommodates the growth of CCPD and Courts staff overtime. It is entirely possible that by the time substation construction is complete, staff would already have outgrown that facility.

Secondly, a criminal justice center would allow the Municipal Courts to have dedicated space for Court hearings. Currently, the use of Council Chambers for court hearings is workable, but during the exploration of needs, Courts staff identified several practical and safety concerns with the current layout of Council Chambers (such as dedicated, safe jury deliberation and attorney/client meeting spaces).

Finally, constructing a criminal justice center has the secondary benefit of freeing up additional space at the Civic Center for growing staff needs outside of the police department. Nearly every department and division working out of the Civic Center is outgrowing their current space needs. Even with remote work and hoteling of offices, staff is rapidly outgrowing this Civic Center; moving most police and courts staff to a new headquarters would free up additional room for the other growing staffing needs.

With this need explored, staff leadership and HOK elected to pursue a criminal justice center/police headquarters. With this type of facility, the existing space in the Civic Center would become a sub-headquarters for Police staff, allowing them to have a sufficient presence in the Core City.

If Council so directs, staff will work with HOK to discuss substation(s) alternatives.

Space Requirements

Projected growth in staff needs also increases the additional services, resources, and spaces needed in a new facility. HOK worked closely with CCPD staff, Courts staff, IT, and Facilities to identify the minimum requirements for a potential criminal justice center. Following those discussions and using their expertise constructing similar facilities, HOK outlined that a new facility would need the following features and spaces:

For CCPD Support, Administration, and Operations:

- A secure police-specific entrance and lobby
- Dedicated administration space
- Dedicated operations space
- A secure holding facility
- A vehicle storage garage

For CCPD Support Services:

- Dedicated administration space
- A secure records room
- A secure evidence/property room
- Dedicated training and recruitment spaces
- Dedicated space for investigations
- Dedicated victim services space
- Dedicated space for remaining support staff

For Municipal Court:

- A secure court-specific entrance and lobby
- A secure court-specific screening area
- A Municipal Courtroom
- Dedicated administration space
- Dedicated Jury deliberation space and Jury services space

Using this draft program, HOK reengaged with CCPD and Courts leadership to complete an activity

called “blocking and stacking”. In this activity, HOK discussed the physical location of the different spaces to ensure that any specific geographic requirements are accommodated. An example of this activity would be that the CCPD vehicle bay would need a secure hallway to safely transport individuals from police vehicles to holding spaces. Following this activity, HOK created a draft space program that outlined minimum space requirements for a facility, including the basic footprint of a facility which allows staff to engage with developers on potential locations and sites for purchase.

Findings

HOK’s final report is included in your packet tonight with both the general space program, adjacency proposal, and cost estimates. (Note: The Space/Adjacency Concept Program is coded using numbers from 1.100 to 6.200. That number is not the square footage, merely a coded number used by HOK staff.)

Overall, HOK estimated that a new facility would require 133,712 square feet of space. The facility would be no higher than two stories to avoid any airspace concerns. Details about their draft adjacency projections are included in the Space Program report.

Cost and Financing

In the ROM document, HOK has provided both low-end and high-end cost estimates to cover the spectrum of potential material differences. HOK also included an escalator in the costs to better accommodate economic changes and inflation in the Denver Metro Area for when the construction of the facility begins, represented as the (2024\$) values.

In total, HOK estimates the following:

In hard costs (construction supplies, manpower, land acquisition, etc.):

2022 Costs (Low-End/High-End) - \$47,684,919 / \$51,149,469
2024 Costs plus escalator (Low-End/High-End) - \$55,013,601 / \$59,010,618

In soft costs (design and management, owner costs, reservations, etc.):

2022 Costs (Low-End/High-End) - \$22,033,356 / \$24,157,029
2024 Costs plus escalator (Low-End/High-End) - \$23,200,170 / \$25,436,307

Total Costs (hard costs + soft costs):

2022 Costs (Low-End/High-End) - \$71,112,194 / \$77,745,858
2024 Costs plus escalator (Low-End/High-End) - \$79,710,980 / \$87,067,039

Staff has engaged in preliminary conversations with legal counsel and securities experts to discuss potential financing options. Staff and their consultants believe that issuing a Certificate of

Participation (COP) is the best course of action. A COP would allow the City to use the new facility as collateral on the loan, securing favorable interest rates and repayment terms. Preliminary estimates found the following debt service payments at around 4% interest:

20-year Repayment Term (About \$80 Million/About \$90 Million) - \$6.2 Million per year / \$6.9 Million per year

30-Year Repayment Term (About \$80 Million/About \$90 Million) - \$5.1 Million per year / \$5.7 Million per year

There are numerous unknowns at this point regarding cost. First, staff has around \$12 million in audit revenues that Council has dedicated to this project, reducing the bond amounts by that cost. Second, staff is in discussions with various developers who all have presented different levels of interest for this project; some developers may be willing to sell the City the land with little other negotiations, while other developers have expressed interest in cost-sharing agreements that could further lower the overall bonded amount owed by the City.

Finally, it is critical to understand that a debt repayment term of this size does require deep consideration about the City's continued ability to maintain a healthy financial situation. Payment for this facility should not and cannot be exclusively out of the City's currently healthy fund balances. Further conversations will be necessary in order to understand the fiscal impact of this facility.

Next Steps

Following this presentation, Council will enter into Executive Session to discuss potential locations and provide staff direction for the acquisition of real property. Once direction is received, staff will begin negotiations with developers to acquire space. At this juncture, it is not clear how long negotiations may take as several variables will impact the complexity of the negotiations.

Currently, with Council's approval, staff anticipates the following timeline:

- Acquisition of Land - Q4 2022 to Q1 2023
- Architecture and Design Begins - Q1 2023 to Q2 2023
- Debt is Issued - Q4 2023 to Q1 2024
- Construction Begins - Q1 2024 to Q2 2024