

## Using the IACP Police Facility Planning Guidelines: A Case Study Altus, Oklahoma

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So many jurisdictions are coping with outdated and dysfunctional facilities, in many cases because those facilities were never intended to serve law enforcement needs in the first place. The IACP has responded to the recurring requests for guidance and technical assistance coming from its membership in a very specific way.

Rather than pointing to model facilities to be copied or emulated, the IACP research recommends a comprehensive planning approach that would help each jurisdiction identify its own particular facility needs. And beyond identifying the physical issues and responses involved, staff has sought to assist in laying out a broad range of considerations and activities from what to do first, to how to build support for the project, to how to facilitate and achieve programming, design, construction, and a successful occupancy.

Attention initially was directed to previous planning and design guidelines for police facilities to assess their relevance to today's issues and needs. The document that had been issued on this subject by the IACP in 1978 was seen as useful as an overview but not particularly process oriented. For a methodical, total-system planning approach, the *Guidelines for the Planning and Design of Police Programs and Facilities*, prepared under the funding support of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, U.S. Department of Justice in 1973, was recognized as the only publication in the field that approached the subject on the basis of individual jurisdictional need. It recommends a process that allows the solution to be developed in a manner that is appropriate to each situation rather than importing or copying an answer produced for other needs in a different jurisdiction. But is this document dated? Is it still applicable for use today? And since it was a rather large publication, at more than 919 pages, could a more condensed publication be developed that accomplished the identified goals?

To help answer these questions, the author of this article—who is the former director of the National

Photography by Frederic D. Moyer



*A night view of the facility*



*The public atrium lobby in the new facility*



*The public entrance to the facility faces Main Street in Altus, Oklahoma.*



Clearinghouse for Criminal Justice Planning and Architecture where these guidelines were produced —was brought in to serve as principal project consultant in the new endeavor. A great number of other individuals assisted in a project advisory capacity; this new effort was supported by a grant by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice. Director of the IACP Research Center John R. Firman and Senior Program Manager Elaine F. Deck provided guidance and coordination. *The facility features a clearly identified public entrance.*

The *Police Facility Planning Guidelines: A Desk Reference for Law Enforcement Executives* document benefited from all of the previous documents that were reviewed and sought to build upon them. Following an initial printing of 5,000 copies and distribution at the annual IACP conference, it was posted online and can be found through this link: <http://www.theiacp.org/tabid/255/Default.aspx?id=128&v=1> (accessed June 7, 2012).

## Case Study Application in the Field

The availability of this new resource was particularly timely for the city of Altus, Oklahoma. All politics is local, and so is planning for a new police facility. This article provides an overview of how the local officials in Altus followed the guidelines process from start to finish and what results followed.

Altus Chief of Police Mike Patterson's facility was occupying a 1920s former auto garage in tornado country. The building's roof was not attached to any walls. Just about every other deficiency that can be imagined for a police facility or any other kind of occupancy existed. During this time, Mayor T.L. Gramling and City Administrator Mike Nettles were handling city operations across the street from a 1930s former hospital that was similarly incompatible with contemporary need. It was also noncompliant with all applicable codes and standards. A third component, the municipal court, was essentially a storefront operation—lacking security of any kind or the ability to separate or properly position participants in its judicial proceedings. The space was also a small fraction of that which was needed, and the jury sat with the spectators and waiting defendant parties.

The city of Altus needed a remedy for its police, city administration, and municipal court facility deficiencies; it needed to identify exactly what was required for current and projected future needs, to secure funding support for its needed facilities, and to design and construct them within budget limitations. All of this was accomplished, with the dedication of the new police and city administration municipal facility on October 10, 2010.

## The Process

The *Police Facility Planning Guidelines* proposes a facility planning model with four stages:

1. Project Initiation
2. Planning and Predesign
3. Budgeting and Funding
4. Design and Delivery

At the project initiation, the city of Altus opted to select a professional consultant team to work with its local officials, the police department, and the community through all project stages. In this instance, following the issuance of a request for proposal and the submittal of qualifications materials, the team of PSA-Dewberry, architect of record; and Moyer Associates Incorporated, design architect, was selected. In other jurisdictions, a programming or needs assessment consultant might be selected for initial project definition, followed by selecting the architect. Altus chose to identify one team to develop all project phases for the continuity that this would bring to the project development.

Step one of the *Police Facility Planning Guidelines* suggests to "identify and document problems with current facility." This is frequently useful not only in identifying needs to be met in a new facility but also

in building support for the project. In the case of Altus, the deficiencies were so clearly evident and widely recognized in the community that little time needed to be invested in their documentation. An overview was nonetheless prepared to address questions that might be raised by any parties who doubted that remedies were needed.

Step two describes the building of a police internal planning team. Under Chief Patterson's direction, representation was brought from each operational area to work with the consultant team.

Steps three and four address building of political support for the project and identifying and securing planning funds. Four-term Mayor Gramling and City Administrator Nettles skillfully led these steps. The consultant team was called upon to present progress findings on facility needs at regular intervals, which was invaluable in building political support.

With community support attained—step seven—the consultant team moved into stage two: planning/predesign.

Following step eight of the facility planning model, a comprehensive space needs analysis was conducted. This involved administering a survey questionnaire to personnel in all areas, followed by individual interviews for follow-up and verification of information obtained. As always, the information provided by staff, who are constantly on the job, provided the best insights into local and unique operational requirements, which was translated by the consultant into space needs.

Step nine—evaluate facility options—moved quickly past any consideration of remodeling and expanding current facilities. Not only were these sites constrained, eliminating any possibility of expansion, but renovation would have delivered grossly inadequate space and involved throwing good money after bad. The activity moved into step ten—conduct site evaluations—where a new facility could be constructed, taking into consideration the visibility and the ease of access by the public, the strategic effectiveness for the police in delivering public safety services, the adequacy of the site for possible long-term facility expansion need, and the availability and cost.

In the case of Altus, an excellent site on Main Street in the downtown area was identified. It adjoined an historic old train depot in deteriorated condition, which later was designated for restoration and use as a community resource in the municipal complex.

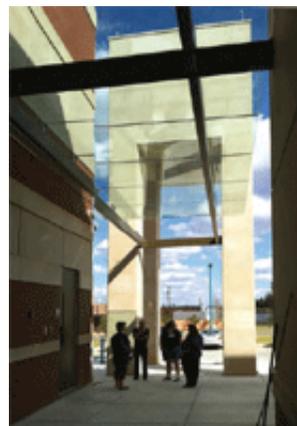
Stage three—budgeting and funding—involved the challenging tasks in steps 11 through 13 of balancing the projected cost of meeting the space needs with the availability of project funding. In step 12, a bond referendum was passed by a three-to-one margin. This was a direct result of the attention that was given to each preceding step and the thoroughness with which each was conducted. In stage three, every line item in the project budget came under close scrutiny. It was possible to carefully allocate the distribution of resources so that law enforcement operational needs, including safety and security for personnel and the public, were not compromised.

With all of the tasks in the first three stages of the facility planning model successfully accomplished, the focus moved into stage four: design and delivery.

As addressed earlier, the selection of the architect—in this case, architect of record and the design architect—had already been completed at the earliest stage of project activity. The



*Altus, Oklahoma, Mayor T.L. Gramling at the groundbreaking*



*The facility features a protected entrance.*

initiation of facility design work, under step 16, was aided by the communication and collaboration that had become the shared experience of the city and police staff and the consultant team through all previous activities. This facilitated the flow of information, the identification of priorities, and the communication of values as individual design issues were discussed and solution options were considered.

Some of the tools that were employed during the design process included the construction of a take-apart study model showing the overall building form as well as the internal space relationships. Throughout the design phase, this model resided on a table in the middle of the city council chambers where it was literally the center of attention for any meeting on any subject that came before the city. In that same space, various building elevation schemes were brought forth for discussion and indication of preferences by the city officials. Similarly, alternative palettes for interior materials, finishes, and color schemes were displayed and discussed.

A particular design issue that will accompany any police facility that is housed in the same building as another occupancy is delivering needed security zoning and security access to law enforcement functions. This was accomplished in the new Altus municipal facility by the combination of design strategies and the use of an integrated electronic security system that accomplishes the identified goals. The police maintain their operations and any needed public access 24 hours a day and seven days a week. The municipal court operates during daytime hours several times each week. City administration maintains a five-day per week, 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. operation, plus occasional evening meetings. The municipal court, which functions on a separate schedule from the city council, makes use of the city council chambers that were designed to accommodate judicial needs, including secure defendant party holding.



*The planning and design study model*

With the close attention that was paid to each phase of project scope development, construction bidding was achieved right at the project budget, and the project moved forward immediately into construction.

Incorporation of the *Police Facility Planning Guidelines* yielded an end result that everyone felt they had helped to develop, which indeed they did.



*A crowd gathers for the new police and city administration municipal facility dedication on October 10, 2010.*

As a postscript, Chief of Police Mike Patterson retired near the completion of construction, but he has since been elected to the Altus city council. He now benefits from that part of the project scope.

The close collaboration of all city and consultant parties and the new municipal complex that is the pride of Altus are examples of what can be achieved through the application of the *Police Facility Planning Guidelines*.

Far from being prescriptive, the Facility Planning Model that it outlines is open ended. Each jurisdiction is encouraged to enter it at the point where they find themselves and even rearrange the order of some of the steps if they find that this is more appropriate and useful for their particular situation. In a larger sense, it presents a checklist of considerations and activities that may be helpful in the identification of needs and the delivery of needed facilities. ♦

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