

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PROPOSED NEED FOR A NEW POLICE HEADQUARTERS



COUNCIL BLUFFS
LAW ENFORCEMENT CENTER
COMMUNITY STUDY GROUP

1. Why does the police department need a new headquarters facility?

The Council Bluffs Police Department currently operates out of a building built in 1977 by Pottawattamie County for a variety of county uses, as well as for the city police department. At the time of construction, the police department had 110 personnel. The department now has 131 personnel, and is expected to grow to 171 personnel over the next 20 years to keep pace with the overall growth of Council Bluffs' population. The current police headquarters facility, still owned by the county, has 19,000 square feet. Industry best practices suggest the department should have between 32,750 and 52,400 square feet to accommodate the current force, and will need between 42,750 and 68,400 square feet by 2036.



The current headquarters of the Council Bluffs Police Department

2. Can the police department renovate its existing facility?

The current facility is faced with many deficiencies. The renovation would be costly and difficult as space is very limited and inadequate for the department needs today, as well as 20-30 years in the future.

3. How were locations identified as potential locations for the new law enforcement facility?

A total of 13 locations were evaluated as potential locations for the new law enforcement facility. Ten of the locations were recommended to the community study group by sources in the community or city government officials. The remaining three locations were identified by the study group.

4. Were city-owned properties considered as potential locations?

City-owned properties were considered as potential locations. However, due to the inability to meet project site criteria (i.e., less than 7 acres in size), no city-owned properties were recommended to the community study group for further evaluation.

5. How did the community study group decide on the top 3 potential locations?

The community study group used 31 site selection criteria to evaluate 13 potential locations. The top three potential locations scored the highest based on these criteria. The remaining locations scored significantly lower, dropping them from further consideration.

6. Can the Mall of the Bluffs be renovated into a new law enforcement facility?

The Mall of the Bluffs site was evaluated as a potential location for the new law enforcement facility. Both the community study group and project consultants independently identified the location as unsuitable for a variety of reasons. Critical deficiencies of the Mall of the Bluffs site include hazard mitigation issues (low bridge, rail proximity, and privately-owned infrastructure), limited expansion opportunities, and security concerns as a result of contiguous property uses and ownership.

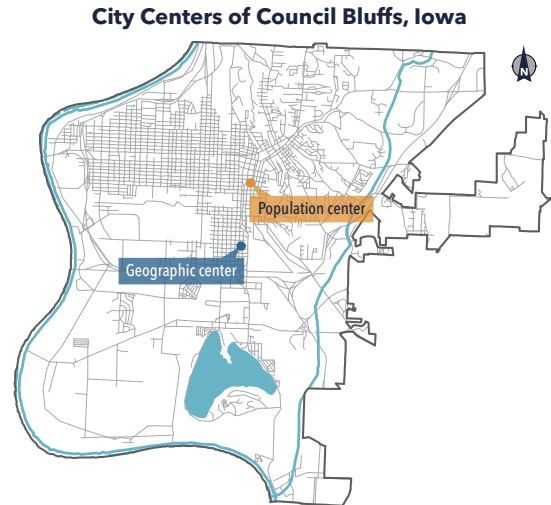
7. Should a new law enforcement facility be built in a high crime area?

All areas of Council Bluffs, including high crime areas, were considered in the site selection process; and each identified potential location was evaluated using 31 site selection criteria. It is a common misperception that locating police facilities in high crime areas will reduce crime. What commonly occurs is a shifting of the high crime areas into other parts of a community as criminals move their activities away from police facilities. The Council Bluffs Police Department already uses a "community policing" approach, which keeps its officers deployed throughout the community and especially in high crime areas. As such, it is more ideal for the headquarters to be sited in a location where officers can quickly deploy to any part of the community.



8. Should the police headquarters remain in the downtown area and near the population center of the city?

All areas of Council Bluffs, including the downtown area, were considered in the site selection process. However, there are no sites in the downtown area that are large enough to accommodate future expansion of a new facility or would allow for time-efficient development. Many downtown locations would also result in higher project costs due to property acquisitions, residential and business relocations, and infrastructure relocation and upgrades. Additionally, the police department's "community policing" approach does not require the headquarters to be located at or near the city's center (population or geographic). Rather, the headquarters must have effective and efficient connectivity to all parts of the city to support the constant deployment of on-duty officers throughout the community.



9. How will the community benefit or be safer as a result of a new law enforcement facility?

A new police headquarters offers the community a variety of benefits and enhanced safety:

- Durable and low-maintenance finishes will dramatically reduce operation and maintenance costs.
- Covered parking will significantly reduce the maintenance costs of the patrol fleet.
- Increased community visibility and improved accessibility of the facility will allow the community to more easily visit the police headquarters.
- Effective multi-purpose areas, such as a community room that can double as an emergency operations center, will maximize the facility's use without compromising necessary functions.
- Sufficient and intentionally-designed workspaces will better accommodate the police department's current and anticipated functions, including an improved crime lab and cybercrimes unit.
- The inclusion of a sally port will increase the safety and security of people and property.

10. How much will a new law enforcement facility cost?

The total cost of a new police headquarters is dependent on land acquisition/preparation costs and facility construction costs. In an effort to capitalize on potential return on investment opportunities, the community study group has incorporated cost-efficiency measures into its recommendations. For example, the group recommends the facility's finishes be durable and low maintenance in high-traffic and heavy use areas, as this will minimize maintenance and preventable repair costs. The group also strongly recommends covered parking for similar reasons. The police chief in Ankeny, IA reported saving 48% in vehicle maintenance costs as a result of parking the patrol fleet inside.

11. How will the city pay for a new law enforcement facility?

City leadership is considering numerous funding options to pay for a new law enforcement facility. These include, but are not limited to, the following: private and governmental grant programs; municipal bonds; private and corporate donations; as well as other traditional municipal financing means. Potential grant and foundation opportunities have been identified and evaluated; however many of these programs are tailored to equipment and law enforcement programming versus actual structural building costs.

The city staff and elected leadership are working with many resources to strategically evaluate funding options that provide the citizens of Council Bluffs with a positive return on their investment. The new law enforcement facility will serve the citizens of the community with confidence in design, functionality, and positive financial impacts in operations and maintenance.

12. What effect will the community study group's recommendation have on the city's decision?

The city intends to adopt as many of the community study group's recommendations as possible. The community study group members have put in a great deal of time in evaluating facilities, locations, and the needs of the police department to help the city make an informed and appropriate choice for a new police headquarters.

13. What are the plans for the current facility once the police department relocates?

The current facility is owned by Pottawattamie County. As such, the county will decide how to repurpose the space.