

## Creating Safer Police Facilities

By Jennifer Vreeland/Arcari + Iovino Architects, PC

If you're running a police facility, we have bad news for you: The building likely does not comply with state requirements and regulations. "When we visit the various police stations around New Jersey we find it is common that they are deficient in one way or another from safety and current Department of Corrections regulations for prisoner handling," says Anthony Iovino, AIA, LEED, AP and principal of Arcari + Iovino Architects, PC of Little Ferry, New Jersey. Iovino and his partner Edward Arcari have had the experience of working on hundreds of public commission projects at local municipalities, public libraries, public safety departments, schools and universities, and state agencies in New Jersey and New York.

Most police facilities continue to operate well past their planned life span, reports the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP). They often become seriously overcrowded, suffer from a lack of sufficient infrastructure (HVAC, electrical, data, telecommunication), and use outdated security and safety systems. Furthermore, these conditions often impair staff efficiency and morale, occupant safety, policing effectiveness, and public perception of the department.

Until recently, the Tenafly Police Headquarters was one of these statistics—it had not been updated since the 1960s, and officers had been struggling for years to operate within the overcrowded facility. Lack of space and compliance issues were only a couple of the problems that the former Tenafly Chief of Police Michael Bruno faced. He had been pushing to expand the facility since 2002, knowing for his police department to operate properly, it was absolutely necessary to renovate. A modern, technologically up-to-date facility was not a luxury; it was imperative to public safety.

In 2011, Arcari + Iovino Architects, PC was hired to perform an assessment of code compliancy, safety, and adequate space, and to design the new facility. The firm quickly discovered that the building didn't meet current code requirements and had serious deficiencies. For example, the dispatch area was cramped, there were no interview or juvenile-interview rooms (officers used hand-held recorders to interview suspects at borrowed desks), there were no locker rooms or showers for the female employees, the conference room was also used as a lineup room, and lunch tables doubled as a weapons maintenance table. Furthermore, processing and the cellblock areas opened directly to the public area. Consequently the halls had to be cleared when a visitor came to the captain's office or a prisoner needed to be transported to processing so that the visitors could not interact with the detainees. Outside, the building lacked handicap accessibility, and the Sally Port was also used as an open storage area and garage bay. The ERT vehicle had to be stored at another location, causing possible delays on response times.

Does any of this sound familiar? Look around your department—for example—does the staff's lunch room refrigerator double as the evidence holding space, could the separation between the police, public and detained zones be improved? If you have a pre 1980s building, the answer is likely "yes."

Arcari + Iovino Architects, PC has extensive experience of public safety projects—some of which include police department projects in Edgewater and Hasbrouck Heights. The firm worked closely with Chief Bruno and his Captains to create a layout that was code compliant and increased the efficiency of the staff. The plan included a 15,000 square foot police headquarters consisting of a 10,000 square foot addition and a renovation of about 5,000 square feet to the existing 47-year-old building. The borough's initial cost for the expansion and renovation was estimated around \$4.4 million, which was paid for through a capital improvement ordinance.

The design, budget, use and life of a new facility were a huge role for the now retired Chief Bruno. "Arcari + Iovino ensured that the design and construction process was truly a collaborative effort, combining their design skills with my practical experience of the flow of a police facility and its various functions and needs," says Bruno. According to the *IACP's Police Facility Planning Guidelines: A Desk Reference for Law Enforcement Executives*, the project team has the greatest opportunity to change building philosophy, size, and design with the least impact on cost in the beginning phases of the project. Joseph Frangiosa, Arcari + Iovino project architect, provided the former chief and his project team with clear, concise, and comprehensive drawings that reduced costs and kept the project under budget.

"Admittedly, the construction process was a bit interruptive, but manageable," says Bruno. He and his employees were relocated to temporary offices in trailers in front of the Tenafly municipal hall, and they relied on neighboring

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towns to detain individuals since they did not have cellblocks during the construction period. However, a year later, March 2012, the new building was completed and with it came technological advancements, efficiency, and most importantly—safety. Here are some of the renovation advancements:

**Safety:** The flow of how a prisoner is handled and properly contained in the new facility improved in the new space. State-of-the-art access and video surveillance technology with electronic card readers were installed which provides multiple levels of access to allow or deny access to department members based on rank, assignment, and need. HD video cameras were implemented with pan/tilt/zoom capability to complete the overall security picture. The entire lobby area is protected with bullet resistant panels in the walls, bullet resistant doors, and Level III bullet resistant glass at Dispatch and the Records windows. Also, doors are now interlocked to prevent escape and feature card readers.

**Privacy:** Those coming to the department to report an issue or in the case of juvenile or domestic disputes were able to be more discreet in the new facility. "Sightlines through the internal corridors and even the width of those hallways were thought through to help create an efficient and safe facility," says Iovino.

**Setup:** The new station now has the administration area (offices for the chief, secretary, and captains) in the front of the building, group areas (training room, conference room) in the center of the building, and staff spaces located in the rear (offices, and newly added lunch and locker rooms, and weapons/ammo area). The processing area now includes two prefabricated jail cells, an interview room equipped with a panic button and a built-in video camera system tied to the dispatch desk. The new Sally Port was designed adjacent to the processing area for proper handling and the transfer of prisoners. One garage bay was designed specifically for the ERT vehicle and equipment, with a ceiling mounted plug charger for the vehicle locker rooms (both male and female); weight room; lunch room; storage; records; and mechanical room were all added. There is also room for storage of required equipment (e.g., fingerprinting equipment, alcohol tester).

**Fewer distractions:** The dispatch room was set up to limit interaction with other areas of the building which reduced distractions. The entire room was constructed with a raised floor to allow cables to be installed to the equipment. All sightlines were considered to insure that the monitors were not visible to the public.

**A bonus:** The building's 5,000 square foot addition allowed for the borough hall to add much needed spaces like a Guest Office, Maintenance Supervisor Office and a variety of storage and work areas as well. This was paid for with funding left over from the police project, and at a fraction of the cost of expanding the municipal building.

**Eco-friendly design:** "One of our goals was to implement as many green-design solutions as possible," says Iovino. "Architecture should be responsive to and in conjunction with the environment we live in." To reduce the new building's carbon footprint, Arcari + Iovino installed energy saving measures like higher wall and roof insulation R values and window U values than the minimum required by the latest energy code which brought down heating and cooling loads and consumption. The rooftop HVAC units have higher EER values than required by the latest energy code and use R-410 non ozone-depleting refrigerant. A carbon monoxide detector system was installed to control the garage and exhaust fans that save energy, as does the new 93% efficient hot water, gas-heated boiler. The plumbing fixtures have automatic sensors and flow restriction for water reduction; toilets are one gallon per flush; urinals are 1/8 gallon per flush. Energy-efficient fluorescent lighting with occupancy sensors (that adjust the lighting when not in use) and a series of light tubes in corridors (to bring in natural light) were installed.

It was a long time coming for the Tenafly Police Headquarters, but in the end, well worth the wait. "Anthony Iovino, Joe Frangiosa, and their firm brought the highest level of professionalism and design skills to the project. They partnered with my staff, taking the input of each division into account to create a facility that met all of our needs and exceeded our expectations. That building is something I will forever be proud of—and I thank them for that," says Chief Bruno.

IACP reports there are almost 19,000 state and local police agencies in the United States. Each has, or will in the future need to plan, design and build a new headquarters, precinct or substation. Since the useful life of a police

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facility can range from 20 to over 50 years, a new facility project is typically a “first time” experience for most law enforcement executives. They have little or no expertise in the subject area. Effective planning for a new or renovated law enforcement facility is the most cost-effective step a jurisdiction can take to ensure a successful project outcome.

## Tenafly Police Department BEFORE PHOTOS



## AFTER PHOTOS

