

Legacy Planning *Looking Ahead to the Next Project*



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Legacy Planning

Looking Ahead to the Next Project



By Ken Newell

The design and construction of any Fire Station project is a very involved process that will require a significant investment of time and energy from multiple people in your department. This investment of time and energy will result in specific, valuable experience for those personnel. From the initial pre-planning, to the selection of the architect, and all the way to the completion of construction, there will be many options and considerations for every decision made. To be certain, the representatives from your department that are tasked with the responsibility participating in the design process will come away with much more knowledge than they had going into the process.

Larger departments often go through the “new project” design process frequently enough that the lessons learned from the last project are still fresh in the minds of the decision makers. The reasons behind previous decisions are more likely to be remembered by the personnel who made those decisions. However, small to medium sized departments may go ten to thirty years between station projects. Lessons learned are easily lost or forgotten in those time frames.

Who from Your Department will be Involved?

Typically, just one or two leaders, such as the Chief and a high-ranking Assistant or Deputy, represent the department through-out the entire project. Their seniority has given them the role of decision makers and they fulfill that role well. During the course of the project they acquire a whole new “education” that has little to do with emergency responder services. The experience they gain is extremely valuable and would serve any department facing a construction project quite well.

So what is the problem? Since these few decision makers have typically earned their position through years of service, they are often just a few years from retirement. So when it is time for the department’s

next design and construction project, all the experience and knowledge gained in the previous project(s) is lost. The new decision makers might not know the reasoning behind the choices made on any previous design projects.

With such a probability of decision-maker turnover in any department, how can you develop a continuum to insure that the valuable experience and knowledge gained in the current project is not lost for future projects?



Involve the Younger Personnel

Most Departments have younger personnel that demonstrate a high level of competence and loyalty. These individuals are likely to be future decision makers. Consider tagging them for a role in the current project. It is even more beneficial if the younger person selected will be stationed at the new facility. As an end-user, they are most likely to offer their most earnest contributions to the success of the project. Their involvement in the process will also prove important in the success of future projects. They will learn what qualifications are important to consider when selecting an architect. They will hear and learn what considerations are important for your department and the design of any future stations. They will experience the challenges to be faced during the project construction.

With a working knowledge of the many issues surrounding the completion of a successful project, these future leaders will provide an unbroken chain of information to future building committees and design teams.

The Project Manual

Over the life of the project, there will be hundreds, if not thousands of documents produced that reflect the effort of everyone involved. Having future access to most of those documents is helpful. However, there will be just a few dozen critical documents

that truly trace the major decisions made. A few examples of these important documents are;

- Written directives or authorization from governing boards to pursue the project
- Departmental pre-planning goals and mission statements
- A concise narrative of property evaluations
- A concise narrative of the Architect selection results
- The final, approved Written Program of Spaces
- The existing facility assessment (if a renovation or addition project)
- The final Schematic Design Floor Plan(s), Site Plan, and Exterior Renderings
- The final Design Development drawings
- The final Construction Documents
- A copy of the Building Permit(s)
- The General Construction Bid Tabulation of Bidding General Contractors
- A copy of the Certificate of Occupancy
- The As-Built Drawings

You should make a special effort to collect all of these critical documents into one combined package. A hard copy kept in a binder (include an electronic copy as well) can become a very valuable tool which allows future decision-makers to see what led to your successful project.

Conclusion

You will serve the Department well in the role of design project team member. You will learn so much more about what makes a successful station project, and even what should be avoided next time. Don't let all of that great experience be lost when you hang up your gear. Use these ideas and others to pass the facilities-design baton to those coming behind you.



Photos in this story are of the new 18,000 SF Fire Department Headquarters in Sevierville, TN. SCNA was retained to design the project. The new Fire Station replaces an aging station that was constructed back in 1961.

The old station has been demolished and the construction of the new headquarters has effectively rehabilitated the site of an old water treatment plant.

