

**Dodge County Sheriff's Department – Fremont Police Department – 911 Communications
Joint Law Enforcement Center – Question and Answer**

Q: Is a jail going to be included in this project? How much more will it cost to transport inmates from the new facility to the courthouse for court appearances?

A: Dodge County may consider building a jail onto the Sheriff's Department in the future. Currently, they contract with Saunders County for incarceration services. One of the reasons Dodge County purchased a one-half interest in the land at 29th Street and Lincoln Avenue with the City is because this site has enough room to add a jail in the future. There is no additional cost for transporting inmates. Suspects are arrested and taken straight to the Dodge County holding facility the majority of the time; this function is not dependent upon the location of a law enforcement center.

Q: What do we get for \$18 million?

A: A joint law enforcement center that will house the Sheriff's Department, City Police Department, as well as the 911 Communication Center. The County's share of the cost is almost \$8 million and the City's share is slightly more than \$10 million.

Q: Where do I go for these services: title inspections, gun permit, etc.?

A: Title inspections are done at the Sheriff's Department, so it would move to the new Joint Law Enforcement Center. Gun permits are obtained at either the Sheriff or Police Department, depending if you are a County or City resident; both would be located in a new Joint Law Enforcement Center.

Q: What current City bond debt affects my property taxes?

A: Total City bond debt is \$1.88 million for the Splash Station. Bonds that have been approved but not issued are \$2 million for the City Auditorium.

Q: How much bond debt do other similarly sized cities in Nebraska have?

A: Here are the populations and bond debt from other cities: Columbus – 23,468 - \$18,655,000; North Platte – 23,659 - \$19,870,000; Norfolk – 24,449 - \$14,168,543; Hastings – 24,692 - \$3,845,000; Fremont – 26,383 - \$1,880,000; and Kearney – 33,867 - \$31,085,000.

Q: Dodge County just increased my property valuation by over \$20,000. Will the Joint Enforcement Center cause my valuation to go even higher?

A: No, the Joint Law Enforcement Center will not affect how the County determines property valuations. According to the Nebraska Department of Revenue, real property valuations are determined according to professionally accepted mass appraisal techniques, including but not limited to the following: (1) comparing sales of properties with known or recognized values, considering location, zoning, and current functional use (also known as the sales comparison approach); (2) the income approach; and (3) the cost approach. All real property is assessed at or near 100% of actual value.

Q: Why didn't Dodge County buy the old National Guard building on Lincoln Avenue for the Sheriff's Department?

A: That building is not big enough for the Sheriff's Department. Also, the site is too small and has no room for growth, including the space to add a jail should Dodge County choose to do so.

Q: Who in government will benefit from a Joint Law Enforcement Center?

A: A Joint Law Enforcement Center will benefit those in law enforcement the greatest by having their basic needs met (secured parking, K9 facilities, locker rooms, space designed for evidence storage, training room, adequate

space for offices, interview rooms, and officer reporting area, etc.). Other benefits will be experienced by supervisors and support staff because of the efficient, larger spaces and newness of the building. The public also would benefit from the Joint Law Enforcement Center with only one location to go to for their Sheriff and Police needs.

Q: Why are bonds being considered, which are assessed against real property, instead of taxing sales throughout the City and County?

A: An additional sales tax was considered, but it was not pursued. Here are several reasons why. Voters in each village and city that levy a local sales and use tax (Fremont, North Bend, Nickerson, Dodge, Scribner, and Uehling) would have to approve the additional sales tax. Ninety-five percent (95%) of sales in Dodge County are from transactions in Fremont, so a sales tax would place a higher burden on Fremont shoppers and shops.

Q: What will it cost the average property owner in Fremont?

A: The Joint Law Enforcement Center would cost approximately \$78 per year. This number is based upon an average property valuation of \$150,000 and the County and City issuing 15-year bonds at a 2% interest rate.

Q: What will it cost County property owners?

A: 12.7 cents per \$1,000 of property valuation per year. This number is based upon the County issuing 15-year bonds at a 2% interest rate.

Q: Why must Fremont voters consider two ballot questions?

A: Fremont voters will vote on a County and a City ballot question, because they live both in the County and in the City. Voters outside Fremont will only vote on the County ballot question.

Q: If the City and the County build separate law enforcement buildings, would Fremont voters still be asked two ballot questions?

A: Yes, constructing two separate facilities doesn't change the fact that Fremont voters live in both the County and the City, so they would be required to vote on a new County building and a new City building.

Q: Would it cost less if the County and City each built their own law enforcement building?

A: No, it would likely cost more because they would not share common areas, such as a training room, locker room, and garage space, as well as building equipment like security, computer network, HVAC, electrical, and plumbing systems.

Q: Why build a new facility? Can the existing Police Department building be renovated?

A: The Fremont Police Department is housed in a 60-year-old building that was originally designed as offices for the Department of Utilities. The major components of the building are failing: roof, windows, HVAC system, electrical and plumbing. These items are replaceable but replacing these components still does not meet the needs of the Department and the building remains land-locked, leaving no room for future growth.

Q: Who owns the Fremont Business Park?

A: Most of the Fremont Business Park is owned by the City; however, where the Joint Law Enforcement Center is proposed to be built, Dodge County and the City jointly own the 12-acre parcel. At the December 11, 2018, City Council meeting, City Council unanimously approved the sale of a one-half interest in Outlot A to Dodge County and executed an interlocal agreement which states,

'...it is in the best interest of the County of Dodge, Nebraska (hereinafter referred to as "Dodge County") and the public safety of the citizens of Dodge County to participate in the planning of a joint public service center (hereinafter referred to as "Joint Public Service Center" with the City of Fremont, Nebraska (hereinafter referred to as the "City"); and....

- Q:** Would this replace the current police building now, at Military and Park, and the current Sheriff's Office at 4th and Broad?
- A:** Yes, the proposed Joint Law Enforcement Center would replace both the existing Police Department building and the Dodge County Sheriff's building.
- Q:** What would the County do with their building if a new Joint Law Enforcement Center is built?
- A:** The jail for temporary prisoner holdings would remain, at least until a Dodge County Jail was built, but space on the first floor currently used by the Sheriff's Department could be used for County offices.
- Q:** What would the City do with their building if a new Joint Law Enforcement Center is built?
- A:** Many possibilities are being considered as to what the future of the building would look like, but there are too many unknowns as this time to be able to answer that question.
- Q:** Why was this location chosen? Should the Law Enforcement Center be centrally located?
- A:** A portion of the Fremont Business Park, Outlot A (12 acres), located at 29th Street and Lincoln Avenue, was chosen for the Joint Law Enforcement Center for several reasons:
- The property was already owned by the City of Fremont; utilizing this location prevents the additional cost of purchasing land at an alternate site.
 - The practice of providing law enforcement services does not require a department (Sheriff or Police) to be centrally located. Law enforcement officers are patrolling the City and County the majority of their shift. They respond to calls from wherever they are at that moment and not from the Joint Law Enforcement Center.
 - The site allows for future expansion.
- Q:** Why are you asking for public input when construction has already begun?
- A:** Construction of this project has not begun. At the July 28, 2020, City Council meeting, City Council awarded the 35% design bid to Police Facility Design Group for the Joint Law Enforcement Center. These drawings will provide sufficient design detail to firm up the cost of the building plus provide the public with enough drawings to see what the building will look like.
- Q:** Where is the money from the 23rd Street overpass bond issue?
- A:** The bonds were never issued for the 23rd Street overpass. The third paragraph of the ballot question states:
*"A vote for this proposition will authorize the City of Fremont to acquire right of way for viaduct, to enter into contracts for the construction of the viaduct, to solicit and receive federal and state funds for construction of the viaduct, and to issue bonds in an amount not to exceed \$2,900,000 **first payable from previously authorized sales tax revenue.**"*
- The City did not enter into contracts for construction, so therefore no bonds were issued for this project. There was no new sales tax imposed for this bond issue either.
- Q:** Other projects should take priority, like Broad Street.
- A:** Currently Broad Street is under the jurisdiction of the Nebraska Department of Transportation and is not the City's responsibility, as it is a State Highway. When the Southeast Beltway is complete (estimated in 2023), the State will transfer the responsibility to the City. In the meantime, the State is responsible to maintain and repair Broad Street.
- Q:** Columbus kept their police department downtown, why can't we?
- A:** The project in Columbus had a couple of differences. The first difference is that the City was fortunate enough to purchase an entire city block for them to build on. We value our downtown, but there isn't enough space available.

This would also end our partnership with the Sheriff's Department to build a joint law enforcement center. Since the City and County already own land together, at the proposed site at 29th Street and Lincoln Avenue, the overall cost is less because no land has to be purchased. Secondly, the Columbus Police stayed in their building during the construction phase of their Police Department. They had purchased the land prior to the build just as Fremont and Dodge County have done. Third, the site used by Columbus Police offers enough parking to accommodate their needs. This is in stark difference to the City Police and Sheriff's Departments, which today lacks adequate parking and will become worse as each department grows.

Q: Why has this project taken so long?

A: The feasibility and comparison of renovating the existing Fremont Police Department or constructing a new facility was first studied in 2014. The most recent study from 2017 shows that the cost of a new facility at a new location that would fully meet the needs of the Department and allow for future expansion is nearly the same cost as renovating the existing building. With the partnership of Dodge County in 2018, a new facility to house both departments is more cost-effective for taxpayers rather than building a new facility for each department or renovating each existing facility. Also, further delays will only result in higher costs. The decision to renovate the existing Police Department facility will only benefit the Fremont Police Department and only suffice for a short amount of time. As our community grows, so will our public safety needs, which will require more space. This project has been under consideration for several years, and the need has not gone away.

Q: Is the shooting range going to be a part of this project?

A: No, the shooting range is not part of the project, for two reasons. First, the Police and Sheriff Departments are exploring an outdoor shooting range (not an indoor range) where rifles and shotguns can be used. Second, this location is too close to the city for an outdoor shooting range.