

A LESS INSTITUTIONAL LOOK



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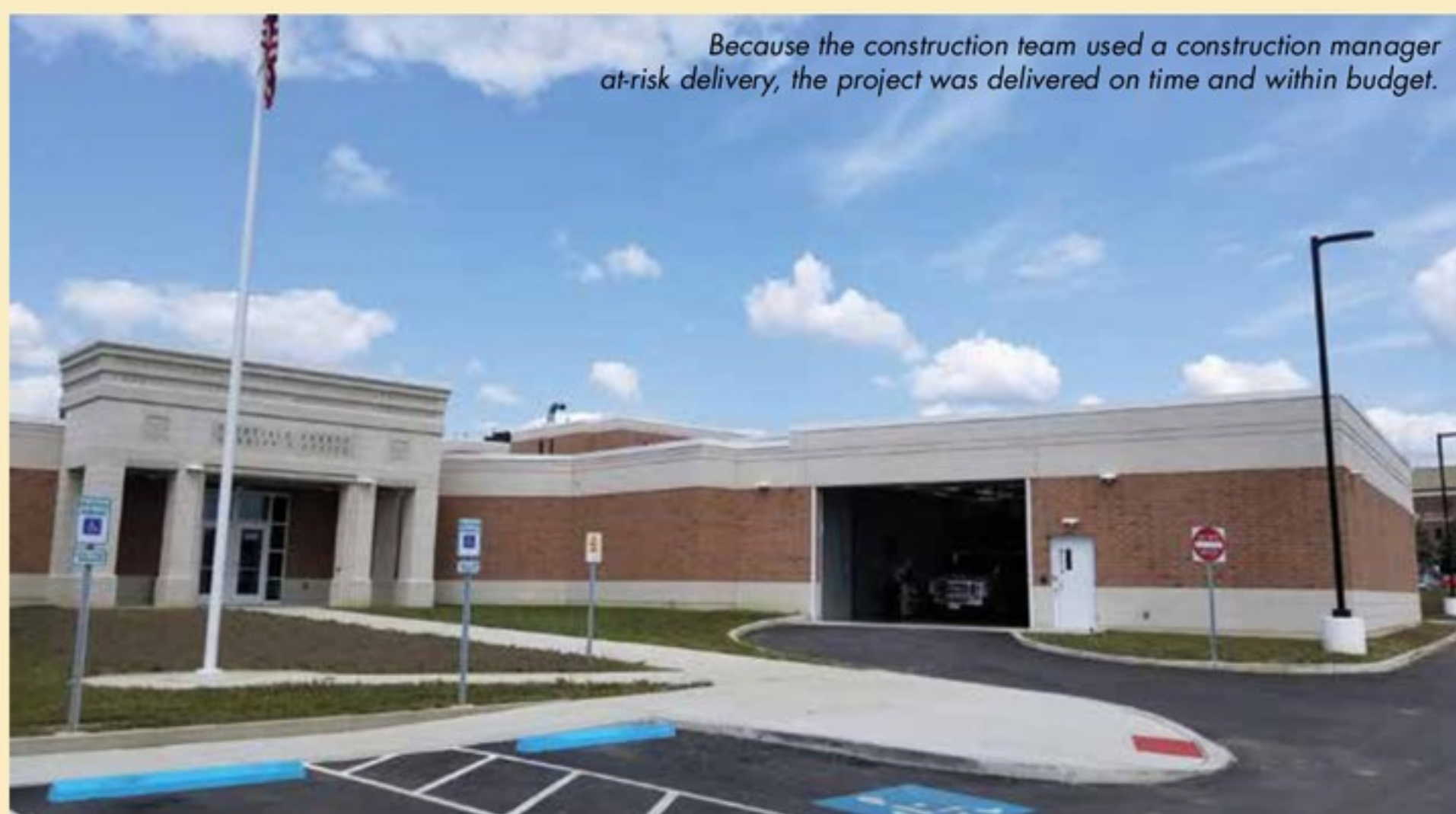
Fairfield County's new jail blends in with downtown Lancaster, Ohio

BY JESSIE FETTERLING



The control center is elevated with glass all around it so that the deputies and correctional officers can see all inmates on both levels all around them.

Photo Credit (all): Granger Construction Company



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THE new 384-bed Fairfield County Public Safety and Jail Facility in Lancaster, Ohio, has no razor-wire fences around it — atypical for a correctional facility of this type and size. In fact, the average citizen would think the jail was maybe a college, technology center or some other common administration building, according to Dennis Keller, facilities manager for the Fairfield County Commissioners. Because of its location in the heart of downtown, this blending in with the surrounding area was something the community wanted, and the project team delivered.

The new 110,800-square-foot facility consolidates all the county jail and sheriff's office operations into one location. Before, inmates were housed in three separate facilities. The county had to rent space from one facility owned by the state of Ohio, while the other two were owned by the county, including one housed on the same site where this new facility was built. Lastly, a fourth facility that held the sheriff's office and civil and detective bureaus was also replaced as part of this project.

Discussions involving the need for a new facility began back in the late 1990s when county commissioners tried passing a bond issue that failed. Then, they started to take the plan for a new jail more seriously in 2013 when all three jail facilities failed a state inspection due to overcrowding. After a lot of analyzing and budgeting, construction on the \$34.7 million project began in October 2015, according to Keller.

The entire project was officially completed on Aug. 20 of this year, but it was built in two phases. Since the new facility was built on the same site as an existing jail for the county, the project team had to build around the existing one that remained operational during construction. Once the new facility was completed, inmates were moved in this June to allow the construction team to demolish the original jail to make way for a 110-space parking lot.

Lansing, Mich.-headquartered Granger Construction Company served as the construction manager, while Newark, Ohio-based Wachtel & McAnally Architects served as the architect. Because the construction team used a construction manager at-risk delivery, the project was delivered on time and within budget, a rare feat these days, according to Garry McAnally, principal at Wachtel & McAnally Architects.

"The sheriff's department was operating out of three separate facilities, holding inmates and transferring them back and forth," said Rob Train, vice president of Granger Construction Company. "The goal was to combine them into one facility and increase efficiencies

in staffing and transportation."

Designing for the Community

Consolidating all the county's jail facilities into one was a significant undertaking. The new facility consists of 384 beds on two levels, administrative offices for the sheriff's department, a 911 dispatch center, training areas as well as intake, booking and visitation areas, and space for the civil and detective bureaus, according to Keller. It also has four classrooms that can be used for inmate re-entry and rehab programs and outdoor recreation areas in addition to a full-service production kitchen.

"It has a unique mix of cell pods and dorm pods to allow [the county] to increase the number of classifications that it can use for people," said Train.

The jail portion of the building is L-shaped, and the housing pods were designed so that each corridor can be observed from two staff posts. From the streets, the building looks more commercial than correctional, added McAnally. From one side of the site to the other, it dropped 8 feet in elevation. The design called for a one-level facility, so in order to save the owner money in site costs, the building was stepped. The corridor from the sheriff's office slopes up 30 feet to the intake area, and then the corridor to the housing pods slopes up another 30 feet. From the street, no one would notice that, McAnally said.

An enclosed sallyport was also a major highlight for

this project, taking up a hefty portion of the structure and making transportation of inmates quicker and much more secure, according to Keller. The sallyport is enclosed by brick walls under a roof, similar to a garage, and it has two lanes that are large enough to accommodate buses as well as six parking spaces off to the side.

"The sallyport for booking and for intake is a nice thing because [the county] really didn't have that before," Keller said. "It was in a fenced area, but not inside the building so to speak."

Amping Up Technology

One of the key goals for the facility was to incorporate the latest and greatest in terms of technology. Inmate housing areas are made up of multilevel pods formed into an octagon shape, while the control center is elevated with glass all around it so that the deputies and correctional officers can see all inmates on both levels all around them. This was a drastic contrast to the previous facilities, which didn't even have electronic locks in some areas, according to Keller.

"[The deputies and correctional officers] can see the inmates directly in 95 percent of the spaces visually in addition to the fact that there are boatloads of cameras in these control centers," Keller said. "There are also electronic screen controls for every door, electric outlets and lights — literally control of everything."

Because this is the county's first time having staff all under one roof, Lt. Mark Churchill also had to reassign rules and responsibilities for the corrections staff to work together. That meant completely updating its operations to use the new camera system, especially since security electronics was quite new to some of the staff members, according to Train.

The facility's exterior look certainly makes it appear less institutional, while still keeping it secure. In lieu of bars or beams on the outer skin, there are dark-tinted glass windows that might be used in an office or school building. From the outside, the public can't see the detention frames and bars across the windows that are on the inside, and all of the outdoor rec areas are enclosed with the same brick walls at the same height of the exterior, so when someone drives by, only the building is seen, not an outdoor rec area behind that.

"We used a complete masonry veneer with brick and some limestone-looking material to make it look more like an institutional building," Train said. "We covered all the detention windows with a tinted commercial-type window so it looked like a commercial window. The secure perimeter is contained within the building, so



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The new facility consists of 384 beds on two levels.

there's also no fence around the site or anything like that that would indicate it's a correctional facility."

Building on an Industrial Site

The site selection required some careful consideration that ultimately made the duration of the schedule a bit longer. The county commissioners really wanted the jail to stay in downtown instead of being moved, but they did find out that the old commercial site had once been a landfill for foundry ash dumped by local glass companies back in the 1800s. Not only did that mean that the site did not have very good soil compaction, requiring a heavy foundation system, it also meant it could be hazardous. Even though foundry ash is not considered by the EPA to be a hazardous waste, it is a regulated waste, according to Keller, and the county needed to be sure that construction wouldn't cause the waste to leak into the city's water supply from the aquifer below.

The foundry ash was only in the top 7 to 10 feet of the site, but the project required drilling 485 concrete-and-steel-encased pilings 55- to 65-foot deep to support the foundation. That said, the main concern was that, when the construction team started drilling, it might carry the foundry ash down closer to the aquifer that provides drinking water to the city, said Keller. The county and project team worked together to create special drilling procedures that required casing off the auger-cast pilings at the depth of the ash with a larger diameter caisson and fill that hole with a soft concrete. Then, they could drill down through the caisson to the 65-foot depth with the auger cast pilings.

The county also installed monitoring wells at the

beginning of construction to record arsenic levels. Using Westerville, Ohio-based Bennett & Williams Environmental Consultants Inc., the county monitored those levels regularly to make sure there was never any significant addition of arsenic to the groundwater, apart from the arsenic levels naturally found in the city well field.

DEC to the Rescue

Another challenge for the project was designing the building around the existing facility and maintaining operations at that facility during construction. This and the fact that some of the public opposed the site location definitely influenced the design, according to McAnally.

"We tried to make it look as much like a commercial building as possible," McAnally said. "We do that with most of our facilities, especially by using windows that look more like commercial facilities. We also always do masonry buildings because they're correctional, but we use material that looks like stone, even though it's a concrete, and we also used brick on this facility."

Train added that the project included masonry cell construction, so there were a lot of detention frames that needed

to be installed. During the time that the construction team was to have cells delivered and manufactured, one of the major cell providers went out of business. Noblesville, Ind.-based Pauly Jail, however, stepped up and did the due diligence to make sure the frames were delivered on time, Train said.

Working Together

Apart from some of the challenges, the new jail was a pretty typical construction project, according to Keller, except for the fact that the architect, construction manager and county really worked notably well together to get it done on time and within budget.

"We ended on budget and got it done on time," Keller added. "I've been involved in a lot of projects throughout my career, and only once or twice did I see a project [like this] get done on time and on budget."

Train added that team work and building a relationship between Granger, the architect, the county and sheriff's department was crucial to the success of this project. "The county was very clear about its goals and what defined success for them, so everyone worked well together because they knew those goals," Train said.

The project was so successful, in fact, that Wachtel & McAnally Architects is working with Granger Construction Company again on a project in Monroe County that is already under construction as well as on some other county jail projects in the works.

The initial jail on the site was already demolished as Phase II of the project, and the second jail that the county used to house inmates will be demolished at the beginning of next year, according to Keller. The lease that the county had with the state to house inmates in the facility owned by the state was terminated in September. ■

project data

Facility Name: Fairfield County Public Safety & Jail Facility
Facility Type: County Jail and Sheriff's Department
Construction Budget: \$34.7 Million
Number of Beds: 384
Area (square feet): 110,800
Start Date: October 2015
Completion Date: August 2017
Owner/Operator: Fairfield County
Owner Representative: Dennis Keller, Facilities Manager
Architect: Wachtel & McAnally Architects
Construction Manager: Granger Construction Company
Detention Equipment Contractor: Pauly Jail
Security Electronics Contractor: Accurate Controls Inc.

product data

Touch Screen Access/Control Systems: Indusoft
Security Screening Systems: Kane Innovations
Security Glazing: Global Security Glazing
Security Cell Doors: Habersham Metal Products
Security Locks: R.R. Brinks
Lighting Fixtures: Kenall
Plumbing Fixtures: Willoughby Industries Inc.
Roofing: Carlisle Syntec Systems
Precast Concrete Plank: Mack Industries
Laundry Equipment: Uni Mac
Correctional Furniture: Modern Detention Equipment



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