

## "GROW WITH US"

# THE CITY OF ST. ROBERT GROWS A NEW MUNICIPAL CENTER

by Bruce Harrill

St. Robert is certainly living up to its motto, "Grow With Us." This small town located on Interstate 44, adjacent to Fort Leonard Wood, may very well be one of the fastest growing small cities in Missouri. The recently completed new municipal center exemplifies the success of the City. In March 2003, the City occupied their new City Hall, moving from an aging facility to a new City Hall with over 30,000-square-feet of office space. At the dedication of the new municipal center, Mayor George Lauritson stated, "This new municipal center reflects what St. Robert is becoming, a growing, modern, small city with a positive future."

### New Municipal Building

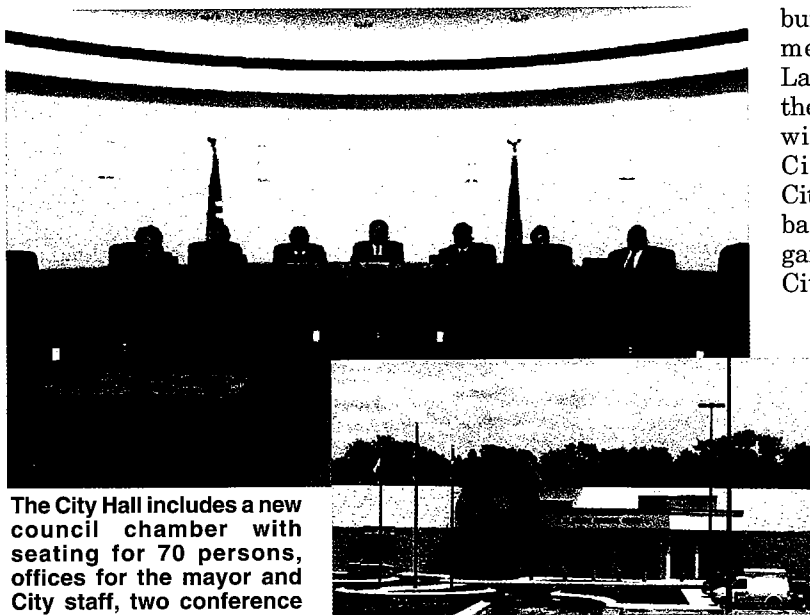
The new City municipal building is over 90,000-square-feet with approximately 30,000-square-feet finished out to house the City administration offices and the police station. The City Hall includes a new council chamber with seating for 70 persons, offices for the mayor and City staff, two conference rooms plus several special features. Some of the special touches include a drive-up window and drop box which offers more convenience for utility customers to pay their utility bills, while the new City museum display area has allowed several community groups to highlight their community activities and projects.

City Clerk Debbie Adkins who has been with the City for 23 years, is very pleased with the new facility and

stated, "There is no comparison with our old City Hall, the new municipal center with the additional office space makes a better work environment for the employees and helps us to better serve the citizens of the City." Of the remaining space in the building, approximately 35,000-square-feet is unfinished and is set aside for future

worked out an innovative deal with the giant retailer Wal-Mart. The retailer was interested in expanding their St. Robert location into a Super Center that would result in doubling the store size to over 198,000-square-feet. In order to finalize a deal for the new Super Center, the City traded land it had originally purchased to build a new City

Hall and in exchange received the old Wal-Mart building plus a cash settlement. Mayor George Lauritson was pleased with the deal stating, "This is a win-win situation for the City and Wal-Mart. The City increases our sales tax base and at the same time gains a building for our new City municipal center." After obtaining the land, the next step was to finance the remodeling cost. The total cost of the municipal center project was \$2.5 million that was financed with a 20-year bond.



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growth.

Also, located in the new building is Drury University with a 20,000-square-foot facility for office, classroom and laboratory space. The arrangement with the City has worked well for Drury and they are growing so fast that they recently entered into an agreement with the City to reserve an additional 5,000-square-feet of space for classroom expansion.

### The Land Deal And Financing

To make it happen, the City

### Architecture And Construction

The City selected both the architecture firm and general contractor by the open bid process. The architecture firm, Gaskin Hill Norcross scheduled several meetings with City officials and staff to help make an efficient design and to plan the office space to meet the needs of the City staff. The architecture firm also took extra steps to breakup the outline of the building in order to change the look from the typical square retail box. Adding a foyer in the front of the building and the outside painting scheme were some of the elements that were successful in chang-

ing the look. In fact, most visitors are amazed to find out that the building was originally a Wal-Mart store. In the interior, special care was taken with the design of the center hallway and foyer to include a windowed alcove and a raised arched ceiling. The council chamber features a vaulted ceiling, wood trim and other special touches that help distinguish the room.

Flintco, Inc. was selected as the general contractor, as the low bid in the open-bid process. Flintco is a Native American company that has had a longstanding relationship in the area, as one of the original contractors called upon by the government to build nearby Fort Leonard Wood during World War II. Flintco used over twenty local subcontractors in completing the project with construction completed in approximately nine months.

### Police Station

The new police station is a model facility that includes police administration offices, a training classroom, an evidence collection room, along with the City jail and other amenities. The

facility also has lockers for the police officers and their equipment along with shower facilities. The training room has classroom space for up to 35 persons and can host training for other police departments and agencies in the area. Currently, a physical training room is in the process of being built which will allow officers the

ability to work out and maintain their physical fitness standards. The jail area has four single cells and a holding cell.

Security in the building is maintained by a closed circuit TV system, which can monitor 13 separate TV monitors in and around the building. The police dispatchers who monitor the security system 24 hours a day are also



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protected in a secure area behind bullet proof glass. Security also is enhanced for the public with a separate entrance for suspects and separate holding areas for victims, witnesses and suspects. In the old police station, space was limited and often victims and suspects may have been temporarily held in the same room. Evidence

collection and storage was another problem at the old police station. With limited space, evidence had to be stored at several different locations. Now, it is consolidated in one evidence storage room, which is a big plus for police officers working a case. Police Chief Bill Mitchell is pleased with the new facility and attributes the new police station with an increased level of efficiency and security for his officers and for the general public.

### IT Support

The new City municipal center has "state-of-the-art" computer technology support, with an internal network (LAN) and an extended network via fiber optic cable to include four different off-site locations within the City such as the City transfer station, fire stations and public works departments. The growth of the City IT Department, mirrors the growth of the City, in the past five years, they have gone from a system with one server and 12 computers to a system of six servers and over 70 computers. The IT Department uses tape backup systems for data recovery and also has recently upgraded the City Web site at [www.saintrobert.com](http://www.saintrobert.com).



The City's IT Department, that oversees a system of six servers and more than 70 computers, enjoys its new space in the new municipal center.

### Original City Hall

The old City Hall now houses the City fire department which has remodeled the old facility to include showers, kitchen facilities, recreation area and a sleeping area for their full-time and volunteer staff. Remodeling the old City Hall has allowed Fire Chief Chuck Fraley to add sleeping and eating facilities that encourage more volunteers to spend more time at the station, which in turn improves the City response time to emergencies. With this latest incarnation, the old City Hall is still serving the City and its citizens.

### Future Plans

The City is poised for another round of growth as Fort Leonard Wood and the region continues to grow and prosper. In the past, St. Robert had to make great strides to overcome its reputation as a "rough and tumble" town that one could typically find outside an army post. Since then, Fort Leonard Wood has become the home to U.S. Army MANSCEN or Maneuver Support Center, which hosts the army engineer, military police and nuclear, biological and chemical schools. As one of the

premier training bases in the country, Fort Leonard Wood trains over 55,000 military and civilian personnel each year with a post population that consistently ranges between 27,000-30,000. Although, it was incorporated in 1951, most of the City's growth has occurred in the past five years. Since 1998, the City has experienced an estimated 63 percent population increase as the area boomed with over \$90 million in new construction and retail growth. While many areas in the nation have experienced an economic downturn, St. Robert has boomed with a resulting increase in the City's sales tax revenue of over 95 percent in the past five years.

As the City continues to grow, City staff is already looking at plans on how to best utilize the 35,000-square-foot of unfinished space in the building. Current growth plans call for the construction of a municipal court room, an expansion of City administration offices and community meeting rooms. Of the expansion plans, City Administrator Norman Herren said, "In St. Robert, the growth never stops, City staff and services need to likewise grow to keep up with the demand."

The St. Robert Municipal Center has helped the City staff serve the growing development in the City and region and as Mayor George Lauritson envisioned, the new Municipal Center reflects the new St. Robert – a growing, modern, small city with a positive future. □

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