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## Work on new police headquarters almost complete

By Pippa Fisher



Police Records Supervisor Cathy Surges-Moscato and Police Chief Eric Christensen at the new Police Station site. Photo Pippa Fisher

An unremarkable 1950s ranch-style building from the outside, but a state-of-the-art 21st century police station inside, the new police headquarters on Mt. Diablo Boulevard is close to completion.

In the fall of 2016, the police were notified that their lease at Desco Plaza would not be renewed. The problem was the growth of the department and not least, the lack of parking for the many police vehicles taking over the old complex.

Now, running two months behind schedule because of unforeseen issues with flooring, the San Leandro-based contractor, Sausal Corporation, who bid for the job at \$1.4 million, has almost finished the project at 3471 Mt. Diablo Blvd., just east of Boswell's.

And if residents are curious about the new building, they won't need to break laws to get inside, as a grand opening event is being planned to showcase the new offices from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 11, complete with a bounce-house for the kids and refreshments - possibly even the clichéd donuts.

Chief Eric Christensen is excited and deeply appreciative of the new digs. He and Police Records Supervisor Cathy Surges-Moscato recently gave this reporter a tour of the almost-complete building.

The facility is light and airy and retains the original raftered ceiling in places. The floors had been recently completed - hardwood, but with a gritty, nonslip finish. The painting is complete but electrical wiring remained exposed and ceiling panels were still missing as the work was being finished.

Christensen explained that because it has been purpose-built with input from the police themselves, the station meets the police department's every requirement. He was keen to showcase the communications features, including secure data-transmission lines, enabling the police to share sensitive material with state and county police officials - not possible in their old location.

The unit is equipped to serve as a secure headquarters in an emergency and its proximity to the Lafayette Library and Learning Center, another key emergency location, is ideal. A new 40-foot radio tower will be installed to the rear of the building. "It has to be that tall to transmit over the library," explained Christensen. They have their own generator, too, should it be needed.

'Smart' electronics control lighting and the building is protected by an advanced alarm system. The sophisticated electronics and communications have necessitated the installation of a new transformer.

The complex features a large conference room, which can be divided as necessary to create a smaller interview room. The room is designed with multiple phone lines to serve as a phone bank when needed.

Behind the reception area are individual offices for administration, detectives, traffic works and youth officers as well as a completely secure evidence room and a communal workspace.

For the first time the men and women who work there will have their own separate locker rooms complete with showers. There is also a communal living area, with a kitchen including stove, refrigerator and sink - a big improvement over the old location, where officers rinsed out their dishes in the one bathroom sink, shared by all staff. To cope with the increased facilities, work has had to include completely redoing the sewage system.

Out back is a secure lot with enough space created partly by the installation of six car stackers, for their 10 patrol cars, six motorcycles, three parking enforcement vehicles and three large police trailers.

Although the landscaping will not be complete by the time the department moves in, residents can expect to see turf and decorative boulders. "And a park bench," added Christensen. A flagpole has already been installed.

The total cost according to City Manager Steve Falk will be \$2.3 million, including architecture, engineering, construction, management and contingencies.

"It will be a state-of-the-art facility," Falk notes, "with modern technology and creature comforts, which will serve the officers well. And while the conversion costs money up front, the building will save money over the long run. So, all in all, this is a big step forward for the city."

Christensen really likes the location, with its easy access to the freeway and its high visibility.

Surges-Moscato says she is grateful to the city manager, city council and the chief for making this happen. "It will be so nice to be in a location where citizens can find us. The building will give all of us tools to do a better job."

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[back](#)

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