



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **City of River Falls Police Department moves to new location March 8**

City saves \$3 million reusing existing space while increasing square footage and adding new amenities

**River Falls, WI** – On Monday, March 8, the City of River Falls Police Department will officially move from a 15,000 square-foot building at 125 East Elm St. in the downtown area, to a new 27,000 square-foot facility at 2815 Prairie Drive in the City's Whitetail Ridge Corporate Park.

"After 50 years, the Elm Street building had outlived its useful life," said River Falls Police Chief Gordon Young. "It was time to make a move."

In 2017, the City hired [Wold Architects and Engineers](#), based in St. Paul, MN, to conduct a space needs assessment for the Police Department.

"Wold helped us zero in on several options for a new station, which included purchasing property and building from the ground up, adding on to City Hall, and remodeling an existing building, including at the Elm St. location," said Young.

Ultimately, said Young, the assessment team recommended that the City pursue new construction. In August 2018, the City Council approved \$7.5 million in 2019-2023 Capital Improvement Project (CIP) funding for design and construction of a 20,000 square-foot facility. The project was expected to begin in 2022 and be completed the following year.

After approval of the CIP, City Administrator Scot Simpson suggested that planners consider the 2815 Prairie Dr. building as a possible alternative to a new build. Constructed in 2004, the building was home to RiverTown Multimedia Corporation, publisher of local area newspapers including the River Falls Journal.

"The building had been on the market for a while," said City Administrator Scot Simpson. "The warehouse space was too small for an industrial buyer and too big for a company looking for office space. But, it seemed like it might just fit our purposes."

"It was a quite a pivot from the existing plan," said Simpson, "but the Police Department, architects, and Council got on board pretty quickly. In the end, we were able to save the City around \$3 million in construction costs and finish the project three years earlier than anticipated."

The building was purchased in January 2019 for \$1.5 million and, in April 2019, Wold was awarded the contract for design and construction administration. In January 2020, [Dell Construction Company](#),

based in Eau Claire, WI, won the construction bid. Design work was completed by spring 2020 and construction began on a 14-bay, 7,500 square-foot garage on the building's south side in June.

River Falls Public Montessori Elementary utilized the building during for classroom space during academic year 2019-2020 while the school's campus was undergoing a complete renovation.

"It was a win-win situation," said Simpson. "I was glad we were able to support the School District by sharing a City resource – and the timing was perfect, giving Wold and our design team time to create detailed plans for the renovation."

Joel Dunning, principal in charge of the project for Wold, said that the staff design team, led by Chief Young and Deputy Chief Aubart, was creative in coming up with unique solutions without adding to the cost.

"The biggest challenge was the budget," said Dunning. "So, every item was scrutinized from floor finishes to furnishings to new paint. The Chief was exceptional in this regard and was always guarding the budget through the entire process. It's wonderful to have that type of person who is helping to keep our job on budget instead of putting pressure on it."

Dunning said that adaptive reuse of an existing building for a police department is rare. While the building met the space needs outlined in the original feasibility report, with the exception of the garage, there were some challenges to overcome including the ceiling height, which prohibited building 20-foot walls to separate offices.

"We worked together to create a concept that the Chief fully bought in to, which resulted in a more open and transparent space. This is not a concept that a lot of police departments embrace. But, I think our good collaboration that made it workable."

"When you first hear that the owner representatives are going to visit the site daily, you become concerned," said Dell Construction Company owner Susan Kumferman. "However, we found the River Falls' representatives knowledgeable about the building and the project work scope. ... We were pleased to play a part in creating the department's vision."

Gordon said there is room for expansion on the property, including the garage, and anticipates that the department will remain in the building for the next 30-40 years.

"I am proud of the way our Police Department worked with other City staff, designers, and builders to create this wonderful new asset for our City," said Mayor Dan Toland. "I want to thank the City Council for supporting this project from conception to completion. And, I want to express my appreciation to the community for the tremendous support it has given to our department and this project. It shows the high regard that citizens have for the men and women who live their mission to 'protect with courage and serve with compassion.'"

**LOBBY HOURS:** The new station lobby will be open to walk-in traffic beginning March 15; hours will be 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Mondays through Fridays. For the week of March 8, citizens may continue to schedule appointments by calling 715-425-0909.