

Police department getting room to grow

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City secures site for new headquarters

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The city of Fort Collins inked a \$1.8 million land deal Tuesday for a future police headquarters.

The 10.8-acre site — on the west side of Timberline Road between Drake and Prospect roads, just south of the Larimer County jail — will give rise to a \$28 million facility that dwarfs the current police station at 300 LaPorte Ave.

The deal marks the end of a two-year site search and a big step toward resolving what city officials have long seen as a shortcoming. The police station was built in 1957 — originally serving as City Hall — and has been overcrowded for years.

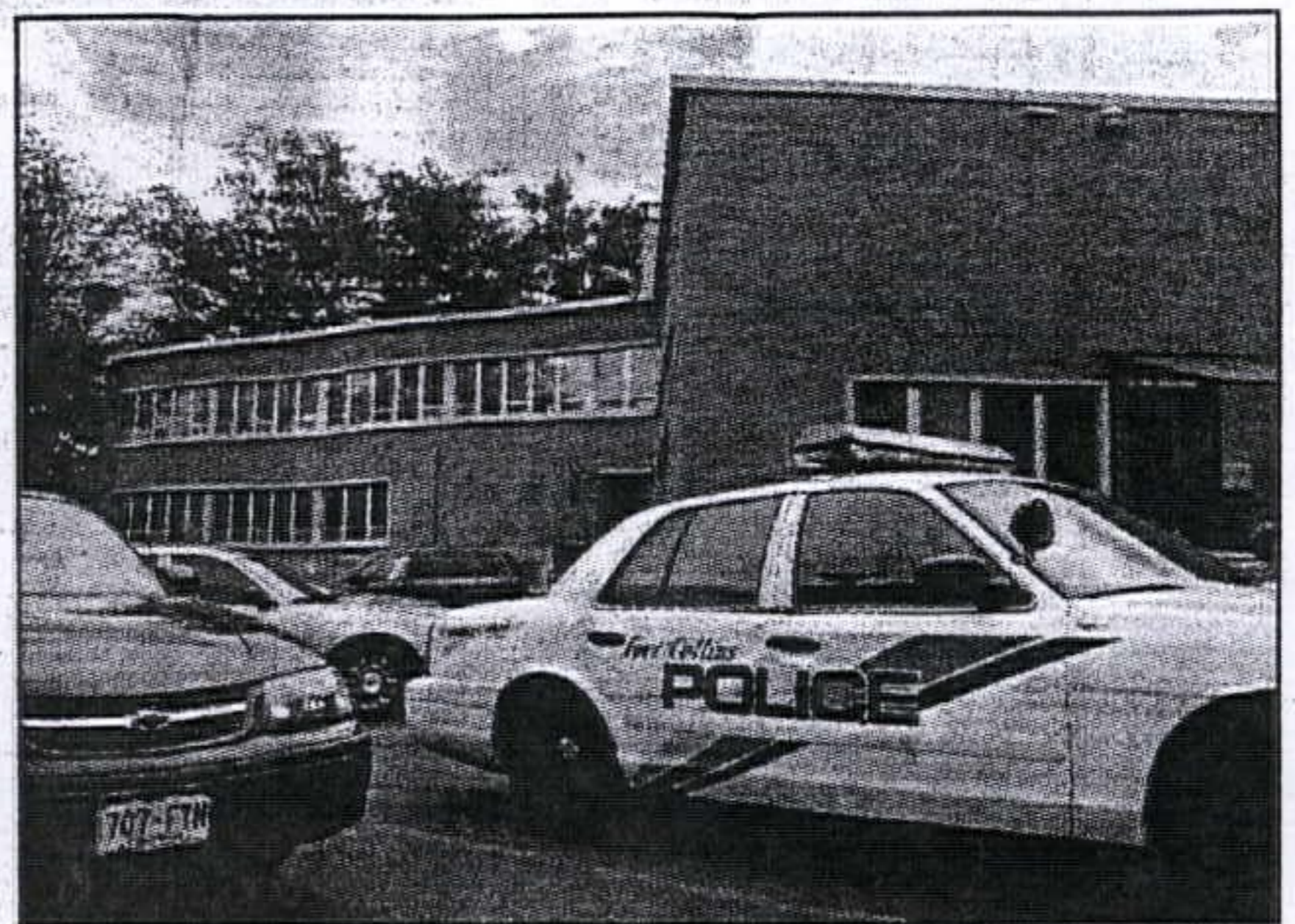
Existing, new site comparison Page A2

"I think this is a significant milestone for (the police department) and the city of Fort Collins," said interim City Manager Darin Atteberry. "It makes me extremely proud we were able to pull this deal together."

"We're ready to roll."

The new facility will provide 92,000 square feet, Atteberry said — roughly 3½ times more than the existing building and enough space to handle growth in the police department for 20 years.

The site — which the city plans to close on next week



Rich Abrahamson/The Coloradoan

CRAMPED QUARTERS: A new facility is being planned for the Fort Collins police department. The current building, at 300 LaPorte Ave., is pictured above.

— also affords more elbow room, with 7½ acres for the building and any future additions.

The city plans to break ground in 2006 and open the

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station by 2007 or 2008.

"We've been pushing this for several years now, and it's finally become a reality," said Mayor Ray Martinez, who worked in the police department from 1974 to 1996.

The city jumped on the parcel, Atteberry said, because of its central location and proximity to the jail, downtown and the city's transportation network.

The Timberline/Prospect intersection has been a continuing trouble spot for congestion, but the city is setting aside \$507,000 in an escrow account to help pay for improvements. Numerous possibilities exist for funding an expansion of the intersection and Timberline Road, Atteberry noted, including the establishment of a special improvement district.

"We are going to have adequate infrastructure down there before this building opens," he said.

The \$1.8 million for the land comes from the 1997 Building Community Choices sales taxes approved by voters.

The city will fund the facility through the issuance of Certificates of Participation, which are similar to bonds. More than \$32 million worth of such certificates already have been issued for the project. The city will pay for the building with 22 annual payments between 2005 and 2026.

To make those payments, City Council has been setting aside for the new building roughly \$400,000 a year for the past several years and should have \$1.6 million built up by next year. City Finance Director Alan Krcmarik said \$8.2 million is available through police impact fees on new construction, Building Community Choices money and capital projects funding.

All told, the city plans to set aside \$10 million to \$10.4 million up front in an interest-bearing account dedicated to pay for the facility, Krcmarik said.

"The beauty of this is that we've taken care of this critical issue in a primary service area without going to the voters and asking for a tax increase," Martinez said.

By the numbers

Existing police station,
300 LaPorte Ave.

- Built: 1957
- Site size: 1½ acres
- Building size: 26,564 square feet

Planned police station, along
Timberline Road between
Drake and Prospect roads

- Built: break ground in 2006; open in 2007 or 2008
- Site size: 10.8 acres, 7½ net acres (subtracting space for future roads)
- Building size: 92,000 square feet