

Gearhart Public Safety Building: Perspectives from the Key Stakeholders

This document provides a deeper understanding of the proposed Gearhart Public Safety Building, addressing its necessity and the benefits it will bring to our community. Below, perspectives from the Fire and Police Departments, the City of Gearhart, and the Consulting and Design Team explain why this project is critical and how it will be thoughtfully designed to balance practicality, functionality, and cost.



Fire Department and Police Department's Perspective: Protecting Our Community

Why This Project is Essential

Our Fire and Police Departments are the backbone of Gearhart's safety and security. However, the current facilities are outdated and no longer meet the needs of our first responders. The space is undersized, lacks critical safety features, and is not up to code. These challenges directly impact our ability to respond effectively to emergencies.

For example, our firefighters and police officers face significant health risks due to inadequate decontamination spaces, which expose them and their families to harmful toxins carried home on their gear. Studies show that modern decontamination facilities can significantly reduce these risks, lowering exposure to carcinogens by up to 85%. Additionally, volunteers often work extended hours under challenging conditions without proper facilities to rest or recover, directly impacting their readiness and performance during emergencies. National standards emphasize the importance of adequate rest and recovery spaces for first responders, and without these updates, our ability to protect the community is hindered.

Addressing the Challenges

This project provides practical solutions to these problems:

- **Modern Classroom Spaces:** Our volunteer firefighters undergo the same rigorous training and certification as paid staff in larger cities. Updated facilities will allow them to train effectively and maintain readiness. For instance, certifications such as FF-II require up to 123.5 combined hours of classroom and hands-on training, which our current facilities cannot adequately support.
- **Bunk Rooms for Volunteers:** Volunteers often respond to emergencies during off-hours. Dedicated bunk spaces ensure they can rest between shifts, improving safety and performance.
- **Improved Decontamination Facilities:** Proper decontamination spaces will protect firefighters and their families from harmful toxins and contaminants they encounter on the job, reducing long-term health risks.

Community Benefits

- **Enhanced Emergency Response:** Modern facilities will reduce response times and improve readiness, saving lives and property. The chosen site location is estimated to reduce response times compared to alternative sites.
- **Lower Insurance Costs:** An improved ISO rating will lower homeowners' insurance premiums, providing direct financial benefits. For example, a shift from ISO Class 8 to Class 4 could save homeowners \$300–\$500 annually.
- **A Safer Gearhart:** This project ensures that our first responders have the tools and resources they need to protect the community effectively.

A Call to Action

We urge the community to view this project as an investment in our shared safety. This is not a luxury but a necessity to ensure Gearhart remains a safe, welcoming place for everyone.

City's Perspective:

A Practical Investment for Gearhart's Future

Meeting Gearhart's Unique Needs

Gearhart is a growing community with unique challenges. As city leaders, our responsibility is to ensure that essential services keep pace with these changes. Unfortunately, our current public safety facilities are outdated, undersized, and ill-equipped to handle the demands of modern emergency response.

We understand that some residents have concerns about the cost of this project. We have worked diligently to create a plan that balances functionality and affordability. This project is not about extravagance but delivering practical, long-term solutions protecting our community.

Why This Project Is Critical

- **Safety First:** Without updated facilities, our emergency services cannot operate at their full potential. Delaying this project only increases the risk to our residents.
- **Learning from the Past:** Previous attempts to address this issue were met with community concerns about cost and location. This time, we have taken those lessons to heart, ensuring that this proposal reflects community feedback and provides a clear path forward.
- **Cost-Effective Solutions:** By investing in this project now, we avoid the higher costs of deferred maintenance and inflation. Construction costs have increased by a national average of 5% annually since 2015. Delaying this project by even two years could increase costs by over \$1 million.

Economic and Community Impact

- **Property Values:** A modern public safety facility will enhance property values by ensuring reliable emergency services.
- **Insurance Savings:** Improved ISO scores will result in lower home insurance premiums, potentially saving hundreds of dollars annually.
- **Community Pride:** This project reflects Gearhart's commitment to safety and resilience, fostering a sense of pride among residents.

Funding with Transparency

We are using multiple funding sources to minimize the financial burden on taxpayers. General Obligation Bonds will be the primary mechanism, with additional grants helping to offset costs. The estimated tax increase is a practical investment in our collective safety.

Looking Ahead

This project is about more than just a building; it's about ensuring Gearhart is prepared for the future. With your support, we can create a facility that meets today's needs while anticipating tomorrow's challenges.

Consulting and Design Team's Perspective: A Thoughtful and Resilient Design

Who We Are

Klosh Group and FFA bring decades of experience in public facilities. Our role is to reflect Gearhart's unique needs while delivering a cost-effective, durable, and functional building.

A Collaborative Process

We have worked closely with city officials, first responders, and residents to understand this project's challenges and opportunities. Our approach is rooted in collaboration and transparency, ensuring that every decision is informed by community feedback and industry best practices.

Addressing Key Challenges

- **Site Constraints:** The selected site balances accessibility, safety, and cost-effectiveness. It is centrally located to ensure quick response times while avoiding the additional expense of acquiring new land. The chosen site is expected to improve response times compared to alternatives.
- **Disaster Resilience:** The design meets Oregon's Essential Facility standards, ensuring the building can withstand natural disasters and remain operational during emergencies.
- **Practical Design:** Every square foot of the facility serves a clear purpose. The building is designed for maximum functionality without unnecessary costs, from shared spaces to flexible layouts.

Design Philosophy

- **Resiliency:** We are incorporating energy-efficient materials and systems to minimize environmental impact and reduce long-term operating costs. For example, energy-efficient systems are designed to reduce operating expenses over time, offering potential cost savings to taxpayers through lower utility bills and maintenance costs.
- **Flexibility:** The facility is designed to adapt to future needs, ensuring it remains a valuable asset for decades to come.

Commitment to Transparency

We are committed to keeping the community informed throughout the project. From public meetings to detailed updates, we want residents to feel confident that their input shapes this essential project.

Building Gearhart's Future

This facility is more than just a building; it is a cornerstone of Gearhart's safety and resilience. With your support, we can create a space that protects and serves the community for generations.

We encourage all residents to stay informed and engaged as this project progresses. Together, we can build a safer, stronger Gearhart.