

2022 APWA PUBLIC WORKS PROJECT OF THE YEAR NOMINATION

# NOBLE COUNTY ANNEX BUILDING

## ALBION, INDIANA

NOBLE COUNTY  
ANNEX BUILDING  
109 NORTH YORK ST.



AMERICAN  
**STRUCTUREPOINT**  
INC.



**WEIGAND**  
CONSTRUCTION

# NOBLE COUNTY ANNEX BUILDING

The Noble County Annex provides a modern, energy-efficient, highly functional space to house multiple county offices under one roof instead of scattered among multiple buildings in Albion, Indiana.

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

The design team faced several design challenges:

- Designing a building to fit in the available site.
- Choosing materials to complement the design of the historic county square and the Noble County Courthouse located across the street.
- Meeting the space and working requirements of multiple departments for future decades. The 2-story, 40,000-ft facility includes customized offices for each department, an open lobby featuring natural daylighting, multipurpose meeting space, and an outdoor plaza for the entire community to enjoy. The new building improves the efficiency of interdepartmental workflow and provides ease of accessibility to the public. The annex is also significantly more energy efficient than any of the previous individual spaces, which will produce long-term cost savings on utility costs.

The facility resolves space issues the county grappled with for years while also providing the Albion community with a new landmark creating a sense of place and pride for county residents. With multiple county departments located in one building, collaboration is as simple as walking down the hall, which has increased efficiency for every county department. The Noble County Annex Building promotes increased productivity, enhances the quality of life for county employees, and better meets the needs of county residents.

“This is a fantastic building. I think it is going to meet all our expectations for decades to come.”

– NOBLE COUNTY COMMISSIONER GARY LEATHERMAN

## **DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROJECT TO MEET A PERCEIVED NEED OF THE COMMUNITY**

For eight years, the Noble County Commissioners pursued building a new annex to better meet the needs of the public and county employees. County government operations were housed nine different buildings, two of them leased, spread throughout the county seat of Albion. These included the courthouse on the town square, separate offices for the prosecutor and public defender's offices, and a separate building rented for court services such as the probation department. Another facility housed the health department, surveyor's office, building department, plan commission offices, and the 4-H extension office. Some of these buildings were in disrepair, were not energy efficient, and had issues with mold and pesky nuisance insects.

After receiving the results of a space study conducted to analyze the current footprint and future needs of county offices, the County Commissioners saw a clear path ahead. The commissioners decided to move forward with the long-term goal of bringing as many county offices together as possible, particularly those offices that work together often. They wanted to build a modern, energy-efficient, centralized building to solve their space issues. Locating multiple government services at one convenient location also would provide better service for members of the public who conduct county business in person rather than online.

## **CONSTRUCTION SCHEDULE, MANAGEMENT, AND CONTROL TECHNIQUES USED**

This project used the public construction manager as contractor (CMc) process. The method allows the construction manager, architect, and owner to function as a team through the pre-construction process. Construction Manager Weigand Construction quoted a maximum price for the project, which is the absolute top dollar amount the county as the owner would pay. If costs went over the maximum price, the extra cost becomes the contractor's expense. This was achieved by all parties being involved in design meetings and the CMc assisting in the constructability of details along with associated cost/budget impact along the way. Budget checks were performed at design phase milestones to ensure the job was free of unnecessary costs. As a part of that—certain portions of the project could be identified as alternate bids—so relief valves would be available on bid day.

The project team heavily used building information modeling (BIM) to assist in working out conflicts digitally and to make sure the fieldwork could proceed as planned and be installed correctly the first time. By taking advantage of this approach, the team omitted extra steps and created more room for the construction workload and schedule.

The overall project timeline was broken down into smaller, three-week "look-ahead" schedules that solicited input from trade contractors at foreman meetings. This allowed for efficient coordination with contractors, improved regulation of short-term and stretch goals, and provided timetable insights on a macro and micro level.

The team—Weigand Construction, architect American Structurepoint, and Noble County - pivoted from in-person meetings and used Zoom for several construction meetings as a large portion of the project was built through a pandemic. This kept communication channels open so that schedule needs and concerns were addressed quickly and efficiently.



## **USE OF ALTERNATIVE MATERIALS AND PRACTICES DEMONSTRATING SUSTAINABILITY**

Area trade contractors were utilized to minimize travel times to the job site. Weigand Construction rented space in a vacant local business building to save resources for importing a job site office and to give back to the community. Indiana limestone was prominently incorporated into the design of the building. Using brick and stone for masonry construction extends the life of the building beyond using other materials that deteriorate over time.

By using these materials, not only do they keep resource usage localized, but they also extend the overall lifetime of the building. This eliminates aspects of structural maintenance and helps keep costs down.

The architect used high-performance glazing to minimize the amount of mechanical conditioning needed for the building. High-performance mechanical shades for windows were added to balance solar heat gain and to add comfort for those working in the building. All light fixtures are high-efficiency LED lights, and restrooms are equipped with high-efficiency, water-saving fixtures.

To prevent excess dust and debris from spreading during construction, Weigand Construction sprayed water on the site to keep clouds of dust down and preserve air quality during construction. Streets were also cleaned regularly, protecting the area from being polluted by trash and rubble. Seismic sensors were also installed near the foundations of the building to ensure that the work environment did not have any negative impact on nearby residential zones. These methods helped monitor the ecological footprint during construction.

## **SAFETY PERFORMANCE**

Zero lost-time injuries occurred during construction. Construction manager Weigand Construction followed all Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) worksite protocols and implemented ongoing safety measures in coordination with project rules and practices. Weigand conducted 18 safety inspections during the construction phase, and the average inspection score from all the inspections was 98.465%.

The lowest recorded inspection score average taken from the 10 lowest scores stood at 97.36%.

Each subcontractor and Weigand employee was required to attend a Weigand safety orientation meeting. Daily kickoff meetings were held prior to each workday to go over known risks or hazards. Weekly toolbox meetings occurred at the construction site to go over specific project hazards and procedures. All contractors and subcontractors were required to establish their own first aid/medical services and procedures.

## **COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

Although county government officials initiated and had jurisdiction over the annex project, its physical location is within the Town of Albion. The County Commissioners, County Engineer and Project Manager Zack Smith, and American Structurepoint's design team coordinated with town officials throughout the project to keep the town council members informed about the annex's design details. The county wanted to ensure that the new building provided added benefits to local residents beyond the County's day-to-day operations. The building offers a large interior multipurpose space and public restrooms, while all the individual county departments are individually secured after hours. Additionally, an outdoor plaza is available for local fairs, festivals, and community activities for evening and weekend public events.

Community relations efforts included two public meetings to discuss the project. These meetings were well publicized and later summarized in local media coverage to inform the rural county's residents about the project and to allow for public input. Weigand used a webcam for easy monitoring of the job site status during construction, and the community could access the webcam footage as a communications tool regarding the progress of the building.



## **WEIGAND CONSTRUCTION'S COMMUNITY RELATION EFFORTS**

During the construction phase, fencing and signage separated the work areas from public areas for safety and ease of access. Most contractor parking was offsite to free up parking spaces on the square for local businesses. Seismic monitoring was installed to ensure excavation and construction work did not disturb adjacent foundations of historic buildings and local residences. Site logistics (parking/access) were reviewed with the owner prior to commencing work. Logistics were monitored and modified to support the Chain O' Lakes Summer Festival held each June directly adjacent to the project site. In doing this, the construction manager was able to continue day-to-day operations without causing interruption or obstruction to the festivities.

In addition to a strong communication plan that included local vendors' input, Weigand strongly promoted local restaurants for use during construction by construction employees. Weigand also held a corporate community service day. Office and field employees helped renovate and update the new location of the Central Noble Food Pantry prior to moving their operations to the other side of town.

## **UNUSUAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS UNDER ADVERSE CONDITIONS**

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic created an adverse condition not seen in over 100 years. While many communities delayed or outright canceled public building projects, the Noble County Commissioners forged ahead with design plans and later a groundbreaking in November 2020. Despite the uncertainty, the commissioners' leadership showed confidence and resolve in delivering on a long-needed public project for the community. The county, along with CMc Weigand Construction and architect American Structurepoint, pushed ahead in a safe manner to deliver the project on schedule and under budget, a rare accomplishment in today's construction environment of supply chain issues and rising material costs. The local media quoted Weigand Construction President Jeremy Ringger that had Noble County delayed the project, the annex building's size would have been almost 25% smaller to stay within

budget due to the increased cost of labor and materials. Because the county received such a good price on the project's base bid, it was able to include all four alternative bids as part of the project—an outdoor plaza with landscaping, an underground snow-melt system for the plaza, a storage basement, and a furnishings package.

## **ADDITIONAL CONDITIONS DEEMED OF IMPORTANCE TO THE PUBLIC WORKS AGENCY**

Many features and amenities in the new county annex building result from specific goals and objectives set by the county commissioners and project manager Zack Smith. Designing the county office space to meet the specific needs of each department was highly important. County leaders and the architect team held meetings with 20 department heads prior to design to tailor each office bay to specific needs. Thirteen of these departments were eventually relocated to the annex building. Because of this, no two offices in the new annex are exactly the same. Each has been customized to the occupants' wants and needs as much as possible. Some of these offices, such as the county probation department, are open after normal business hours so staff can meet with members of the public. Security is set up so that these offices can accommodate after-hours visitors when necessary.

## **OUTDOOR PLAZA AMENITY**

As stated in the community relations section, the County wanted the annex to add value for the entire community. The 92-foot by 44-foot outdoor plaza adds an amenity that gives more flexibility for hosting and accommodating community events, such as the popular Chain O' Lakes Summer Festival that occurs every June. The celebration happens around the Courthouse Square in Albion and features a carnival, food booths, a parade, and entertainment. The county included additional power outlets along the plaza so that it could be a festival site. A local community organization, Albion S.T.A.R., organizes events and activities to bring people downtown to promote downtown beautification and positively influence the downtown Albion economic climate. It is anticipated this group will use the outdoor plaza for multiple events throughout the spring, summer, and fall of 2023. Other community

groups can contact the county commissioners' office to schedule the plaza space for events.

### **MULTIPURPOSE SPACE ADDS VALUE**

A multipurpose community meeting space and an expansive lobby area inside the annex also were made key annex components benefitting the Albion community. The multipurpose room has been used for multiple county-related events such as an open house hosted by the Purdue 4-H Extension office and a county-sponsored health fair. Other events include emergency management meetings, Noble County Sheriff's Department training sessions, commissioners' meetings, and an Indiana Department of Transportation LPA preconstruction meeting. During 2023, as the county staff becomes more familiar with security needs, may explore allowing county organizations to use the multipurpose space.

### **PUBLIC ART PIECE**

When entering the main annex entrance, one of the first things visitors see is a public art piece of a historic Noble County map. This displays the history of the region, displaying the significance of its storied past to the generations that will come from the community. American Structurepoint architect Nick Peterson collaborated with county commissioners to create this public art piece. He found a digital image of a century-old Noble County map and reached out to a fabricating vendor to create wood panels of the map to be mounted in the public space. The result is an eye-catching 18-foot-tall by 16-foot-wide map. Just below the map is a homage to Noble County's fallen war heroes. Panels contain the names of more than 100 men and women who died in service to their country from World War I to the present. County Engineer Zack Smith reports the county receives many positive comments about the map and war hero remembrance area.

### **ECONOMIC CHALLENGES**

Noble County officials committed to using a general obligation (GO) bond instead of a lease rental Bond, which on a project of this size nearly maxed out the County's debt limit. However, the GO is a simpler and less costly option, which allowed the County to immediately start paying back the bond as soon as the project started, which in turn is cost savings to Noble County constituents. The local media reported that the cost to the average Noble County taxpaying homeowner for the bond was \$14.50 and \$30 per year per \$100,000 of farmland. Additionally, the county commissioners made a promise to the public that they will not take on additional debt until this project is paid off.

Noble County bid the project out at a historically low-interest period with net interest cost of 1.876%. Not only that, but the construction manager signed a guaranteed maximum price contract of \$12,463,837 with the county, meaning that any charges beyond that number would be at the CM's expense rather than the county's. This was an extra measure to protect the best interest of county funds and ensure that the overall cost stayed within an affordable range.

### **CREATIVE USE OF MUNICIPAL RESOURCES, EQUIPMENT, LABOR, OR FUNDS**

The County partnered with the Town of Albion to be a good neighbor during and after construction to restore any areas torn up during construction to be better than they were before construction began. County Engineer Zack Smith wanted to make sure the county went above and beyond to make the area tidy and attractive for the community's benefit. Examples include repaving town streets that were cut into for utility work, bringing utilities up to current standards, and making power connections more accessible.

## **ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Construction occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, which provided several unforeseen challenges. The team delivered the project safely and effectively on schedule and under budget during uncertain times thanks to our project team's ability to adapt and overcome.

For the CM superintendent on this project, Jason Schoeff, the Noble County Annex Building holds special history. The annex building is in Albion, which is where he lives. "This is a pretty important job for me as this is my hometown; it had a lot of significance to me," Schoeff said. Jason is a third-generation Albion resident to carry on a legacy of working to improve the quality of life in Albion. The building that stood here previously (at the annex site) was the old prosecutor's office, which was built in part by my father and grandfather."





*Noble County Commissioners meeting room featuring arch-shaped windows and a view of the Noble County Courthouse.*





*Head-on view of public art piece of the Noble County Map and the remembrance of county service men and women who died in service to their country.*





*Residents in the first-floor lobby gaze at the public art piece depicting Noble County*





*Gathering place in first-floor lobby*



9-1-1 Call Center during the ribbon cutting ceremony





*Hallway lobby on first floor*





*Outdoor plaza area*





*Side view of public plaza and landscaping*