



## Multifunction buildings on the rise

Multifunction municipal buildings have become a nationwide trend as taxpayers and civic leaders look for effective ways to maximize resources. As more communities adopt this trend, other benefits become apparent. Communities throughout the Midwest are looking to architectural/engineering (A/E) firms for guidance regarding the feasibility of planning for this type of structure.

### What is multifunction?

Multifunction buildings, as the name implies, are those that house more than one municipal service. Common examples are schools that also function as community centers, or police stations that are also fire stations or EMS facilities.

There are several architectural design factors unique to multifunction facilities but the key theme is flexibility. Look for conference rooms that can double as reception halls. Meeting rooms with moveable partition walls will allow for groups of various sizes to use this facility.

### Cost savings is major benefit

Why should your community consider a multifunction building rather than multiple separate buildings? – Reduction of the tax burden for the community.

Tax dollars are more efficiently spent since multiple user groups benefit from one facility.

Yes, it is true the initial cost for a single larger building is greater when compared to the cost of multiple buildings built over several years. However, the total cost to taxpayers for a multifunction building is less in the long run.

### Other intrinsic benefits

Beyond cost savings, there are a variety of hidden benefits when considering a single multifunction facility over other options.

Typically, multifunction facilities generate more usage resulting in greater cost effectiveness. Multifunction public facilities encourage interaction between disparate members of the community. Audiences that might not typically cross paths find time to meet-and-greet as they use the same building. For example a fire station that includes meeting rooms, recreational or exercise areas, and a kitchen could also be used for PTA meetings, elderly aerobics training, wedding receptions, or municipal voting.



Multifunction buildings may also offer consolidation of staffing—resulting in more efficient operations. For example, a single administrative staff might provide services for a municipal building that includes a community center, library, and local museum. If these were separate buildings at remote locations, this would not be an option.

### Who should consider?

A reputable A/E firm can help you look at your long range planning and capital budget issues, and then offer options for you to consider. Upon hiring a consultant, a more in-depth analysis can be performed, cost comparisons developed, and recommendations issued regarding the potential use of a multifunction facility to meet your planning objectives and project goals.

Find out how Mead & Hunt can help with your community's infrastructure projects, call toll free 1-888-ENGR-ARC (1-888-364-7272).