



PROJECTS OF NOTE

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DESIGN

Sustainable NYPD Auto Impoundment Facility Wins Design Award

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Associate Editor



New York City-based Spacesmith's design for the New York City Police Department Tow Pound Operations Building garnered a design award in the office building category from the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce. The facility opened this spring and is expected to become LEED Gold certified.

How do you . . . design an impoundment lot that is sustainable, secure, visible, and user-friendly?

Summary: New York City-based **Spacesmith LLP** garnered a design award in the office building category from the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce for the design of the **New York City Police Department (NYPD) Tow Pound Operations Building** located at the Brooklyn

Navy Yard. The project will earn LEED Gold. The Design Award is part of the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce's 2009 Building Brooklyn Awards Program. The Brooklyn Navy Yard is 300 acres of buildings, dry docks, and piers on a historic industrial waterfront. The new Tow Pound Operations Building opened this spring.

The NYPD Tow Pound Operations Building is a public redemption center for vehicles impounded and towed by the NYPD. The 11,000-square-foot, two-level building is among the first LEED-certified police buildings in the United States, as well as the first LEED-certified police complex in New York City. Spacesmith



Large NYPD signage on the latticework on the front of the building increases visibility. The perforated stainless steel

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Photography by Tanya Braganti.



developed the new shades the south-facing windows. headquarters for two clients: the Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation and the New York Police Department. The design is part of an overall campus that includes an auction lot and parking fields. The Brooklyn Navy Yard sought to relocate the police department's existing double-wide trailer tow facility to make room for development. The Navy Yard also wanted to deliver a new NYPD Tow Pound Operations Building that was frugal, since it would be funded by taxpayers.

A challenging industrial site

The historic industrial Navy Yard site presented some demanding conditions. Built on an infilled tidal marsh, the site was replete with high water tables, buried-in-place railroad tracks, abandoned foundations, and old sidewalks. "It was a difficult project in terms of designing a foundation and support system," says Marc Gordon, AIA, Spacesmith project principal. "We had to design on pilings. We designed more than the tow building—there was an entire campus for the NYPD we designed in conjunction with the civil engineer to include an auction lot for towed vehicles that are never retrieved, a retaining wall for the change in level, parking fields, a guard roof, and a roadway from the outside."

The first level of the Tow Pound Operations Building is a dedicated redemption center, which is the customer interactive area for car retrieval, plus office support. The second floor houses the commanding officers, administrative functions, a muster room, a conference room, and locker rooms.



The exterior of the building uses corrugated metal siding.

The exterior of the building uses corrugated metal siding, plus concrete panels on two of the building sides for rainscreen walls. There is a large NYPD signage on the latticework on the front of the building. "We wanted to make sure the building was visible," says Gordon. "We wanted people to know where they are going. The

signage serves a secondary purpose as its perforated stainless steel shades the windows from southern exposure." Gordon calls the large NYPD signage a building selling point. "We were doing a modest building, but at the same time we wanted it to stand out a bit. You can clearly see the building from the street. We wanted it to be known that it was an NYPD facility." As further reinforcement of the theme, the metal panels of the canopies in the front of the building are painted NYPD blue.

Adaptive reuse was also a consideration in the design. "The Navy Yard was interested in what happened after the lease is over. Could they reuse this building for something else? In a sense it was designed so the NYPD signage can be taken down to put perforated metal all the way across the latticework, and the space could function as an office building." Gordon says the building is designed to be sturdy because one of the NYPD requisites was for it to serve as a crisis center in an emergency. Below the signage is the front entrance for customers; employees enter at the rear. "They never mix," Gordon points out.

“Security was important in the design of the public space.”

Inside, the redemption center has a modern, industrial look, with polished concrete floors, oxidized metal panels, natural materials, and exposed fireproofing and decking. “We wanted the customers to feel respected,” Gordon explains. “Also, there is a sense that it’s a permanent, sturdy structure.”

NYPD blue goes green

The Tow Pound Operations Building was originally designed to be LEED Silver, as required for all New York City projects. But it now appears the project will receive LEED Gold once the points are approved. “It is a 24/7 facility with three shifts,” says John Coburn, AIA, LEED AP, Spacesmith director of operations and



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project manager. “The building gets an intense use. As the climate changes, a lot of energy gets consumed by the building. We made improvements to the envelope of the building using high-performance windows and insulation on the walls, plus an efficient heating and AC system. We reduced the energy consumption of the building by almost 30 percent compared to baseline. That is a significant savings. Contributing to the savings are solar panels on the roof that heat water. The primary use for that is for end-of-shift showers for the uniformed officers out in the tow trucks.” Additional savings come from reducing water consumption by 46 percent using low-flow fixtures.

The NYPD signage shades operable office windows. “Every room that is a work space has natural light and a view, which doesn’t happen often in police facilities due to security and locations,” says Coburn. Motion sensors for the lighting fixtures contribute to energy efficiency.



The metal panels of the canopies in the front are painted NYPD blue.

The building used more than 20 percent recycled materials in construction, much locally produced, including recycled content steel. FSC-certified woods were also used in construction.

A sense of place and pride

Gordon says that it is nice to be recognized by the Brooklyn Chamber of

Commerce for the NYPD Tow Pound Operations Building. “A building like this is not foremost in the public’s mind and is something of a back-office function,” he says. “We could have done something that didn’t stand out, but we wanted the

NYPD to have a building to be proud of, and when people come to see it they would know it is an NYPD facility. There is a sense of place and pride for the NYPD in the facility.

“I think buildings like this are overlooked,” Gordon adds. “They are thrown up very quickly—not a lot of thought is put into them. We wanted to change the prototype for this type of facility for the NYPD.”

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