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### Wilsonville's new city hall includes the City Emergency Operations Center

After 12 months of construction, the City of Wilsonville is now serving the public in a modern, smart-looking, and well functioning city hall. Despite challenges involving construction and cross easements, the project was completed in September on schedule and below budget.

The affiliated Specht Companies, originally founded in 1990 and headquartered in Beaverton, are commercial property owners and developers, as well as project and property managers. Specht's expertise is wide-ranging and deep in developing office, industrial, residential and retail properties that over the course of its history totals more than 5 million square feet and valued at nearly \$500 million.

This project centered on the city of Wilsonville's critical need for office space. The old city hall opened in 1983 and by 1989 city staff outgrew the building to the point that the Community Development Department along with the Building and Planning Department leased space at the Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue building on Elligsen Road. The needs were growing as well: Wilsonville's population increased by 132 percent from 1990 to 2005 and the number of services provided by the city increased to keep pace with this growth. To compound the city's problems, its lease was expiring at the fire station and TVF&R needed the space for its own expansion.

Meanwhile, in the summer of 2004, Specht Development Inc. gained control of a prime piece of real estate—then owned by Kaiser Permanente—across the street from the existing city hall. Donn Sullivan, senior vice president of Grubb & Ellis had been marketing the property on behalf of Kaiser. Specht assembled a project team comprised of architectural

## *New city hall eases Wilsonville space crunch*

and engineering firm Group Mackenzie and commercial contractor Skanska USA Building Inc. The Specht team went to Wilsonville's staff and the city council with a turnkey solution to their problems and, very important to Wilsonville, a guaranteed project cost and construction completion date.

Specht and the city have a long history of working well together. In 1989 Specht developed the 250,000-square-foot Stafford Distribution Center in North Wilsonville. In 2001 Specht completed construction of the \$23.5 million, 260,000-square-foot Wilsonville headquarters and manufacturing facility for Precision Interconnect, Inc. Also, Specht served as project manager for the Argyle Square, a \$40 million retail center that includes Target and Costco stores.

Also of relevance, in 2005 Specht completed the \$34 million, 168,000-square-foot Hillsboro Civic Center, which consisted of a five-story city hall as well as a connecting two-story plaza building with retail and office space.

The City of Wilsonville chose to move forward with the Specht proposal. In January 2005 Wilsonville's urban renewal agency prepared for an election to gain approval for the project. On May 17, 2005 the voters of Wilsonville approved the ballot measure by a landslide margin of 83 percent.

In October 2005 the city of Wilsonville and Specht Development signed the official contract to design and build a new \$9.9 million city hall along with adjoining street improvements. Twelve months later the city moved into its new home. The grand opening and building dedication capped off the project on October 5, 2006.

The new city hall is an inviting two-story, 30,000-square-foot building with ample parking for staff, guests and visitors to the nearby City Center Park. The building is constructed of a structural steel framework with concrete block pilasters providing structural shear capacity. A handsome red brick exterior with well delineated columns enhances the building's civic presence. The ebony brick above the second story windows and the black parapet create a cap for the

building, while the concrete wall at the bottom creates the base.

Designers gave special attention to the design for the Council Chambers on the first floor of the building. The chambers were constructed to accommodate the special lighting, audio and video equipment required to televise City Council meetings.



**Guest Column**

**Robert Burns**

The 7-acre site is divided into two smaller parcels by the new extension of Courtyard Drive that connects Town Center Loop East with Park Place. The project included widening of Town Center Loop East into four lanes with a center turn lane and a pedestrian crossing at Courtyard Drive.

Included in the new building is the City Emergency Operations Center. Governmental regulations required the building meet stringent seismic codes, and yet Specht was also required to stay within budget during a time of significant material price increases for structural steel and concrete. The EOC is a multi-purpose space with a movable partition that separates the room into two conference rooms for other uses when not needed for an emergency.

The design team incorporated many green features into the project with a resulting 25 percent to 30 percent reduction in energy use. To encourage visitors and staff to use alternate transportation, the facility offers covered bicycle parking with changing/shower rooms to accommodate city employees who ride to work. Transit stops with shelters are conveniently located close to the building.

City staff leaders expect business to run more smoothly and more efficiently now that their employees work in a centralized location. The site also allows for expansions with a 10,000-square-foot addition that was incorporated into the project.

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