



Otter Tail County Sheriff

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# Expansion proposal

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## Ottertail City Sheriff's Patrol Station

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# Expansion proposal

## Ottertail City Sheriff's Patrol Station

### Issue & Background

The Otter Tail County Sheriff's Office is dedicated to providing excellent service through partnerships that build trust, reduce crime, create a safe environment, and enhance the quality of life in Otter Tail County.

**Issue:** Currently the Sheriff's Office is in dire need of space for E-9-1-1 communications, operations offices, essential equipment storage, evidence storage and processing, detention, and training. Several options are being explored to accommodate this need that include, re-modeling on site, and exploring options for off-site construction. This report explores the option of constructing off-site office space in Ottertail City.

**History:** Part of the current structure occupied by the Sheriff's Office was built in 1920. In 1972 the Sheriff's Office had grown in size to 10 deputies and 3 secretaries, and the department had outgrown the building and construction was undertaken to expand. In 1973 the Sheriff's Office moved into the new facility which was to be shared with the City of Fergus Falls Police Department. The structure is the current facility that stills houses the Otter Tail County Sheriff's Department and the Fergus Falls Police Department.

- 1) In 1972 the Sheriff's Office had a total of 13 employees, 3 seasonal boat and water and responded to 3,133 calls for service. The Fergus Falls Police Department had a total of 17 officers and 2 support staff. A total of **50 additional employees occupy the same amount of space from 1972 to current.**
- 2) Current staffing levels for the Sheriff's Office operations (excluding detention) are 33 sworn officers, 10 communications officers, 9 office support staff, and 6 seasonal boat and water patrol. 2004 Calls for service for the Sheriff's Office totaled 13,616.
- 3) Current staffing levels for the Fergus Falls Police Department are 21 sworn officers, and 6 office support staff, handling close to 10,000 calls for service.

Over the past 33 years there have been minor changes to the Law Enforcement offices to accommodate growing needs, however these needs have fallen short because of growth within both departments. Current trends in community needs, crime and growth within our area have resulted in the need to expand law enforcement within our county.

On September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2005 a presentation was made to the Otter Tail County Board in regards to a concept of a patrol out post in the Ottertail City area. Approval was given by the board to explore the concept and report back to them.

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## Expansion proposal

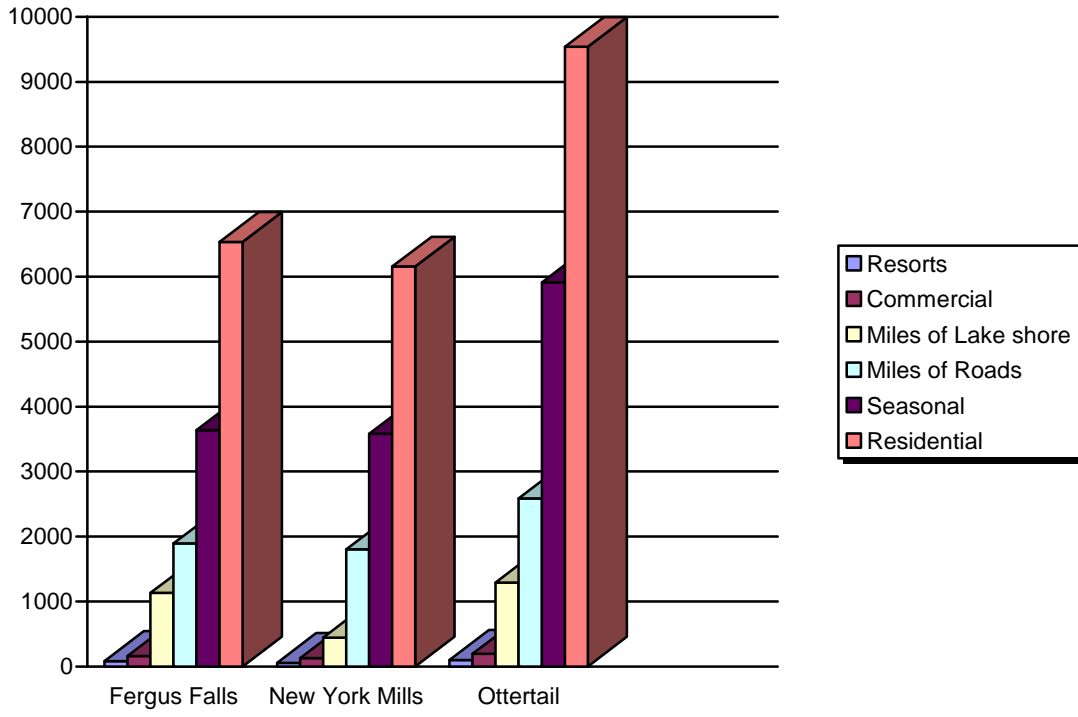
### Ottertail City Sheriff's Patrol Station

#### Demographic Issues

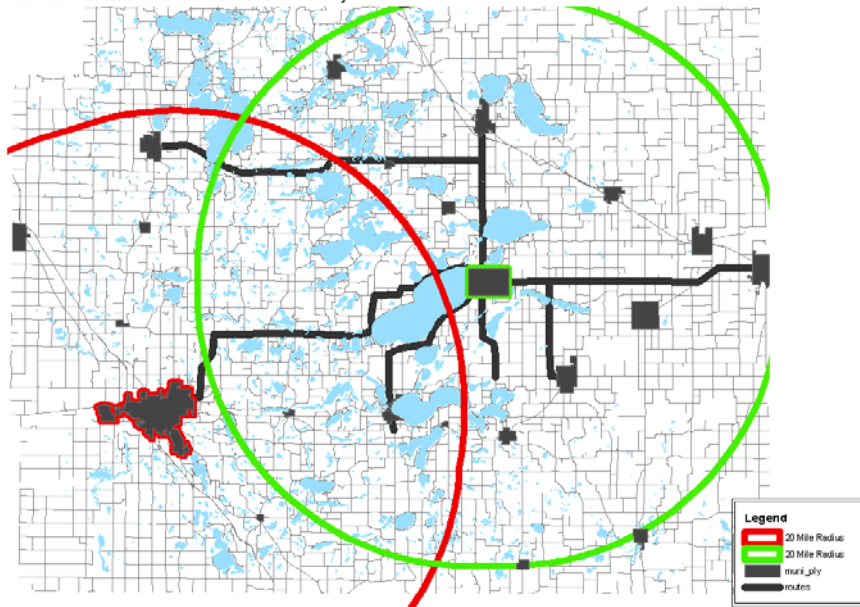
**Issue:** Population trends show continued steady growth within the lakes areas throughout the county. Otter Tail County has over 1,000 lakes within its borders, and 70-80 % of those lakes are located within the central corridor of the county. Otter Tail County also has over 2,000 square miles, making it very large geographically. The current patrol operations hub for the Sheriff's Office is located in Fergus Falls which is in the south western portion of the county. Officers arresting a subject in Perham, New York Mills, Wadena, may be taken out of service for up to 2 ½ hours transporting a prisoner. As a point of reference it takes 40 minutes to travel from Ottertail City to the law enforcement center. Currently the County owns an office building in New York Mills. The New York Mills patrol space is a small office with an interview room, with no storage room, available. This New York Mills Office is located in the North eastern part of the county. As a point of reference it takes 55 minutes to drive from New York Mills to the law enforcement center in Fergus Falls.

- Current figures show that within a 20 mile radius of **Fergus Falls**, there are 3,639 seasonal addresses, 163 commercial/industrial addresses, 6,537 residential addresses, 82 resorts, 1,132 miles of lake shore, and 1,829 miles of roads, with a good portion of that 20 mile radius outside of Otter Tail County. (See attached graphic)
- 20 mile radius of **New York Mills** shows that there are 3,583 seasonal addresses, 125 commercial/industrial addresses, 6,156 residential addresses, 57 resorts, 445 miles of lake shore, and 1,801 miles of roadway, again with a considerable portion of that 20 mile radius outside of Otter Tail County. (See attached graphic.)
- 20 mile radius of **Ottertail City** shows **5,912** seasonal addresses, **193** commercial/industrial addresses, **9,538** Residential addresses, **102** resorts, **1,292** miles of lakeshore, **2,587** miles of roads, with all of the 20 miles radius within Otter Tail County. (See attached graphic).
- A majority of the Calls for Service requests that the Sheriff's Office handles from the public occur within the central lakes corridor of Otter Tail County.
- 2006 Statistics from January 1<sup>st</sup>, through April 1<sup>st</sup>, show that within the 20 mile radius of **Fergus Falls**, **1,176** calls for service have occurred, and within a 20 mile radius of **Ottertail**, **1,634** calls for service have occurred, this is **29 % more**, calls in the radius around Ottertail than Fergus Falls.

### 20 Mile Radius



558 Miles of Road within 20 miles of Fergus Falls  
 788 Miles of Road within 20 miles of Ottertail City



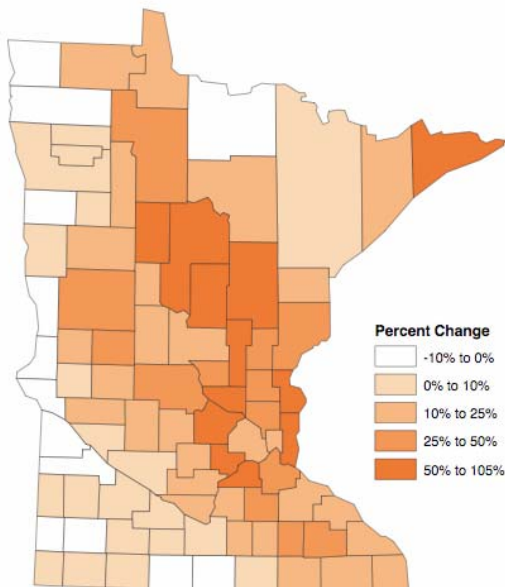
10,770 Rural Dwellings Within 20 miles of Fergus Falls  
 16,189 Rural Dwellings Within 20 miles of Ottertail City  
 Excludes all Municipality Dwellings



**People**

**Projected Population Change, 2000–2030**

Minnesota's State Demographic Center projects that population trends will continue much as they have: the western and southern counties will lose population while growth will continue to radiate out from the Twin Cities and north into the central lakes region. The state's total population is projected to increase by 27% in the next 30 years, but that population will also be aging, perhaps explaining some of the growth projected to take place in the lakes and resort counties.



Data source: Minnesota State Demographic Center  
 © 2005 Center for Rural Policy and Development

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### Community Needs Assessment

**2005 Survey results:** In 2005 the North Dakota State Data Center at NDSU published a report on community needs assessment for Otter Tail County. 7 of the top 8 "High Priority" concerns/issues listed by a majority of the respondents were Law Enforcement related and included:

- Meth or other illegal drug use
- Abuse or domestic violence of children and adults.
- Shelter for victims of neglect, abuse, or domestic violence.
- Crime and law enforcement.
- Threat of violence at school.
- Alcohol abuse.

This survey indicates that 6 of every 10 people polled listed crime and law enforcement a **high** priority. The respondents in the survey were asked for comments and they indicated that they would like to see more law enforcement presence in general, but specifically on the eastern side of the county.

### Law Enforcement Services

**Current Services:** The Sheriff's Office is responsible for Enforcement of the law, Detention of Prisoners, Court Security, E 9-1-1 Dispatch, Water Safety, Civil Process, and Search and Rescue. In 2004 the Sheriff's Office enforcement unit handled 13,616 calls for service from the public, with a majority of those calls occurring with the lakes corridor of Otter Tail County. The Sheriff's Office logs approx., 1,000,000 miles a year both patrolling and responding to calls for service. The Sheriff's Office also operates as part of the search and rescue mission, a dive rescue team, and Sheriff's Posse unit. These two units have equipment that they utilize to assist search and recovery in a timely and effective manner that include, a command communication trailer, all terrain vehicles, snowmobiles, and equipment trailers.

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### Law Enforcement Services continued

To deal with high risk situations, the Sheriff's Office operates a swat team, which also has specialized vehicles to assist them with their duties. Each of these vehicles or pieces of equipment are critically important to have at the scene of an incident as soon as possible. Currently a majority of this equipment is stored in Fergus Falls. This means that to deliver a critical equipment item it may take up to 1 hour to get that equipment to a certain part of the county. In a situation where time is important this can mean the difference between life or death. Use of the current single office patrol station in Ottertail City averages 178 visits per month by deputies, probation, state patrol, and water patrol officers.

### Law Enforcement growth assessment

**Assessment:** This assessment was done on a 15 year projection for the Sheriff's Office and the Fergus Falls Police Department. The Sheriff's Office used criteria based on population growth projections for the next **15 years**, which showed a population growth to **70,900** full-time residents. This projection in conjunction with current needs allowed an educated projection to be put together. Shultz Torgerson Architects assisted with the space analysis study conducted for the Sheriff's Office and Fergus Falls Police Department. Based on the assessment done by the Sheriff's Office the areas of need included:

- Office space for potential growth
- Evidence storage and processing
- Garage and storage space \*\*
- Training/firearms facilities \*\*
- Communications and EOC center
- Interview rooms
- Narcotics investigation area \*\*
- Computer crime investigation area

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### Law Enforcement growth assessment continued

- Water patrol office space and storage area \*\*
- Records Storage

*\*\* These areas if included in an Ottertail Patrol Station would not need to be expanded in Fergus Falls.*

Based on the growth assessment from both the Police Department and the Sheriff's Office there are three options available. (See attached report from Shultz Torgersons preliminary findings for law enforcement)

Under Scenario 1 (Shultz Torgerson findings) there would be a shortage of 10,400 sq. ft. This would require the old Sheriff's residence to be demolished and new construction added to the building. Those dollars could be more effectively spent on a facility in Ottertail city that would better serve the needs of the citizens of Otter Tail County.

Under the first two scenarios there would be no room for growth past this project.

**Advantages of a Patrol Station in Ottertail City:** Several functions for this station would include:

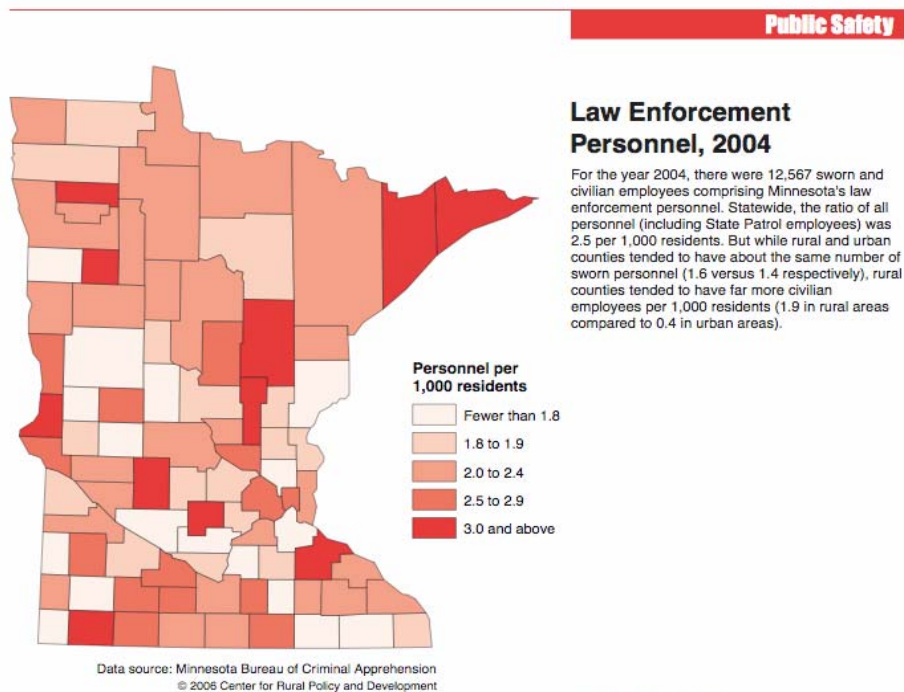
- Logistical staging for critical emergency equipment such as: Emergency Mobile Command Post, SWAT Team support vehicles, Snowmobiles, All-Terrain Vehicles, Dive Team Equipment, Boat & Water Patrol Equipment, Spare Squad cars, and Search and Rescue equipment.
- Training room with storage for training equipment. (MN Post Board mandates that peace officers have training in Use of Force, Firearms, Bloodborne pathogens on a yearly basis, with Pursuit Driving training every 3 years. Peace Officers are required to have 48 hours of continuing education every 3 years in order to renew their Peace Officer License issued by the State of MN. This would allow us to bring more training locally, and provide opportunities to include local police departments in that training )
- Having centralized access to interview rooms, alcohol testing equipment, K-9 training and care equipment, vehicle set-up, evidence processing equipment, evidence processing area (our current ability for modern crime scene processing techniques is limited because of the lack of current facility limitation, ie: ventilation system).

## Expansion proposal

### Ottertail City Sheriff's Patrol Station

#### Law Enforcement growth assessment (advantages continued)

- Centralized access to law enforcement for citizens living in the central and eastern part of Otter Tail County.
- Centralized work and staging area for Boat and Water Patrol Deputies.
- Centralized meeting and training location for monthly Sheriff's Posse unit.
- Centralized office and interview room access for County Probation, and County Social Service Child Protection Workers.
- Possible consideration for future Emergency Operations Center for Otter Tail County Emergency Management.



## Summary

The Sheriff's Office and the County of Otter Tail are at a critical point in the service and response for service that they provide to the citizens they serve. It has been 33 years since the last major remodel for the Sheriff's Office and will probably be another 33 years before the next one. I feel it is very important to consider the growth of the county, law enforcement future needs and the needs of the citizens in regards to law enforcement when making a decision on this project. I feel that a centralized patrol station near Ottetail City will better serve the citizens of the county. A centralized patrol station would not mean that the Sheriff's Office as a whole would move from Fergus Falls, but critical emergency operations and equipment would be more strategically located by moving them to Ottetail City area. Availability of land in the appropriate location will become more difficult to obtain and costs for this land will continue to rise. This is a window of opportunity to plan for expansion that will improve efficiency as well as meet space needs for the next 15 or more years.