



Thanks to a prototype developed by Pieper O'Brien Herr Architects, small Georgia counties are now able to replace dated, dilapidated jails with modern, safe, efficient facilities. The new 60-bed Banks County Jail shows how it's done.



Georgia improves jail security with a new economy of scale.

Small County, Big Cost-Benefits

By Morgan Jones

There are 159 counties in Georgia, and more than 100 have populations of fewer than 30,000 residents. Many number under 5,000. For these small counties, building a new \$3 million jail can require great political effort and strain tight budgets. This was the case in Banks County, population 14,500, which struggled with a crowded, unsafe, linear jail built in the late 1960s. There was only one jailer on each shift working in the 30-bed lockup with barred cells. "Everything was controlled by one person, the key man, who had to open every cell manually," says Banks County Sheriff Charles Chapman. "We had a bad security problem as far as bringing prisoners into the jail. There was only one way to bring them

in, and that was through the front door. We had problems with the sewer system and the roof leaked. Apparently, the facility was not even built to meet county codes." Many such jails dot the state of Georgia, but these cramped, dilapidated facilities are rapidly disappearing from the landscape, in large part due to the efforts of the Georgia Sheriffs' Association. Since 1997, the GSA has offered jail assistance services that help counties meet the challenge of building a new facility. To date, 29 counties have sought a range of services from the GSA, from needs assessment to transition training. Banks County's new 60-bed jail is among those bringing improved security to Georgia's criminal justice system. The county is also Georgia's fourth to take advantage of a small jail prototype by Pieper O'Brien Herr Architects. Fined-tuned by the firm with each site adaption, the

prototype repeatedly attracts sheriffs and county commissioners with its staffing efficiencies, easily accessible recreation and visitation areas, and administrative spaces custom-designed for small counties. "Georgia has a huge need for 40- to 60-bed facilities," says Jeff Pieper, AIA, Principal at Pieper O'Brien Herr Architects. "There were a series of jails built in Georgia in the '60s and early '70s with no provisions for expansion. Counties found themselves with facilities that were serviceable, but left no room to expand. Now, Banks can more than triple the size of their jail and not have any change in infrastructure." The 20,000-square-foot Banks County Jail and Law Enforcement Center is now operated by a staff of four, including a jail lieutenant and jail administrator. Though staffing increased four-fold, security was enhanced by a far greater multiple. The benefit side of the

PRODUCT DATA

Exterior Finish: *EIFS by Dryvit*
Roofing: *GenF/ex Single Ply*
Epoxy Kitchen Floor: *Palmer Inc.*
Gypsum Wallboard: *Gold Bond by USG*
Penal Plumbing: *Acorn, Sloan, Symmons, Ebco, Woodford, Jay R. Smith Mfg., Lawler Mfg., Rockford Sanitary Systems*
Gas Water Heater: *A.O. Smith*
Chopper Pumps: *JWC Environmental*
HVAC: *York*
Detention Accessories: *Bradley, Peerless, Imperial Fastener, Karp*
Door Control System: *South Western Communications*
Programmable Controller: *Omron*
Intercom System: *Rauland/Borg*
Administration Phone System: *Zenitel (Stentofon)*
Closed Circuit Television System: *Pelco*
Uninterruptible Power Supply System: *Powerware*
Visitation Phones: *SPC (Sound Powered Communications)*
Cable Television System: *Blouner Tongue*
Access Control Systems: *Hirsch Electronics*
Personal Alarm and Duress System: *South Western Communications*
Transient Surge Protection: *Transtector and Northern Technologies*
Security Cell Doors.: *Habersham Metal Products*
Security Locks: *Airteq*
Security Glazing: *GE/Insulgard*
Security Windows: *Hopes Windows Inc.*
Security Fencing: *Pride Enterprises, Pane/Specialties*
Security Cell Lighting: *Cooper Lighting*
Fire Alarm System: *FC/ (Fire Control Instrument)*
Security Sprinkler Heads: *Reliable Automatic Sprinkler Co.*
Pipe: *Allied Tube & Conduit*
Valves, Fittings, Rings: *Fire Products*
Air Compressor: *General Air Products*
Water Flow Switches: *Potter Electric Signal Co.*
Ventilators: *Gemini*
Steam Kettles: *Cleveland*
Walk-In Coolers/Freezers: *Kolpak*
Refrigeration: *Delfield*
Ovens: *Vulcan*
Custom Stainless Equipment: *Southern Equipment*

cost-benefit equation is, of course, ease in security. Completed in July 2004, the Banks County Jail was recognized by the GSA as one of the easiest jails to run per dollar in the state.

NEEDS

The needs assessment is the watershed of any jail project, when preliminary proposals begin to take tangible shape before a county commission. Even a needs assessment by an architectural firm

won a second staff post, but it was clear the building was coming apart. Because the jail was already straining its one-acre site, expansion was out of the question.

Lemacks' study indicated Banks County needed a 75-bed jail. A turnover on the commission gave Chapman his opportunity. Grand juries also supported the project. In March 2001, County voters passed a Special Local Option Sales Tax that included \$3 million for a new jail. Commissioners

costing, say, \$50,000, could cause second thoughts in commission chambers. Giving cost conscious commissioners the option of a free assessment can only speed the planning process in small counties, where it's often tempting to stick with the old jail for another year.

The Georgia Sheriffs' Association launched the jail assistance services program after obtaining a federal Burns Grant, according to D.G. "Bill" Lemacks, former Clayton County sheriff and one of the GSNs two consultants performing needs assessments in the field. "The Burns Grant funded our two positions, and when that money ran out after two or three years, the sheriffs went to the Georgia Legislature and showed them we had saved counties money," Lemacks explains. "Our positions are now included in the state training budget."

In Georgia, when commissioners ask for a needs assessment, there's nothing to stop the sheriff. Banks County's current sheriff was in his first term in office when he requested a GSA needs assessment in 1999. He had already given commissioners a tour of the outmoded jail and

selected Pieper O'Brien Herr Architects from an original field of eight firms. County officials had toured the model for their project at the firm's prototype jails in Madison and Union counties.

"What got us into this mode was that every one of these small counties in Georgia has to run a county on \$3.5 million to \$4 million per year," says Pieper. "And here we are, having to build a jail that costs \$3 million. Commissioners are very sensitive to what we can do to reduce costs in energy, staffing and construction, and still give them flexibility and security to the greatest degree possible."

The Pieper O'Brien Herr prototype incorporates 16-bed pods that accommodate four inmate classifications, including women. A single elevated observation and control tower provides sightlines to every housing unit. Banks County was the first in the prototype series to include a glass window in the floor to allow an officer to see the sally-

PROJECT DATA

Facility Name: *Banks County Jail/Law Enforcement Center*
Owner: *Banks County Board of Commissioners*
Architect: *Pieper O'Brien Herr Architects*
Construction Manager: *R. W. Allen & Associates Inc.*
Type: *Podular Prototype*
Construction Cost: *\$3.2 million*
Number of Beds: *60*
Area: *20,000 square-feet*
Start Date: *January 2002*
Completion Date: *July 2004*
Delivery Method: *CM at Risk*
Security Electronics Contractor: *South Western Communications Inc.*
Detention Equipment Contractor: *Detention Equipment Services Inc.*
Mechanical, Electrical, Plumbing: *Jordan & Skala Engineers*
Security Consulting: *Jordan & Skala Engineers*
Structural Engineering: *Brittingham & Associates*
Food Service/Laundry: *Camacho Associates*

port below, made possible by placing the electronic control panel on a pedestal.

Having a separate visitor entrance and booking area keeps inmates out of public view. The close proximity of the booking area, sallyport and other spaces minimize travel distances, a great improvement over the old facility. “The previous jail was only secure when all the inmates were in their cells, behind bars,” recalls Sheriff Chapman. Whereas one jailer used to be responsible for opening every cell door with keys, central control now handles that function remotely.

RESPONSE

Heightening the jail’s presence in the small county, the visitation area at the front of the building doubles as a community distress room. “It’s well advertised throughout Banks County that if you’re in distress, you can come to the jail 24/7 and the doors will be locked behind you from the control tower,” Pieper says.

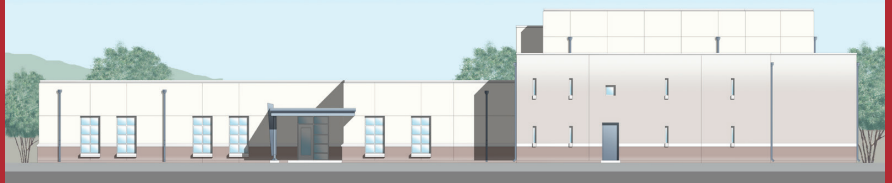
The multi-functional chapel and library save on space. Flexibility of function is also demonstrated in the contact visitation room used for inmate consultations with attorneys. When the lights are turned out, see-through glass becomes one-way glass, and the space can serve as a viewing area for crime witnesses to view suspect lineups.

Ample storage space offered by this prototype is a big selling point for sheriffs accustomed to being constrained in unexpandable facilities. Administrative areas add to the appeal with evidence lockers and a break room.

Pieper O’Brien Herr makes sure administrative space remains accessible to deputies and investigators at all times, but coordinates the administrative areas and mechanical systems to save on energy costs. “The squad can come into their squad room and drop off evidence at any time of day, but the whole office doesn’t need to be up and running, so those heating and cooling systems aren’t operational all the time,” explains Anthony Turpin, AIA, principal of the firm’s justice studio.

“Working from a prototype does not rob the client of options”, Turpin says, and the project team responded to several of Sheriff Chapman’s special requests. Chapman wasn’t comfortable with the fact that the officer at the exterior door had to rely solely on camera monitors to see inmates being brought from the sallyport to the booking area. To solve the problem, a 90-degree wall was moved to a 45-degree angle and fitted with a view window.

Banks County



Madison County



Towns County



Union County



Pieper O’Brien Herr Architects’ jail prototype is currently in use in four small Georgia counties. Use of an Exterior Insulating Finish System allows more flexibility of colors than masonry. The inclusion of a tower or a canopy also gives each facility its own distinct identity while remaining within budget constraints.

Chapman also had the team add a four-man cell for trustees, placed conveniently near the door from the booking area to the housing units. “This way, the trustees don’t go in and out of the housing unit with the general population. Of course, in any facility, people will try to smuggle contraband into a jail,” Chapman says. “It makes it better for us and better for them.”

Architectural flexibility also met the concerns from county commissioners. Although the assessment called for 75 beds, commissioners asked that the bed count be reduced to only 60. Planners answered the request by shelling in an unfinished pod without a roof, to be completed later when the inmate population rises. In the meantime, the future housing unit will serve as an outdoor recreation area.

The four prototype jails in Banks, Towns, Union and Madison counties share most of the same layouts and efficiencies, but differ in appearance. “The exterior design of the facility is designed on the same prototype, but we also wanted every one of these facilities to have their own unique exterior identity, through the use of a tower or a low canopy,” says Pieper.

Using an inexpensive Exterior Insulation Finish System exterior provides greater flexibility of color than masonry, and also can be removed easily when it comes time to expand. The facility is expandable to 200 beds, and architects project that the facility will provide secure housing for Banks County's growing inmate population for the next 50 years.

TRANSITION

The Georgia Sheriffs' Association continues to support jail projects when staff members make the transition to a new facility. "The old-fashioned way to move was just load all the inmates up on the day the new jail was finished and get them over there," says Lemacks. "What you ended up doing was moving whatever old jail you'd come from and putting it inside the new jail."

When Sheriff Chapman considered the challenges of moving from a linear jail run by just two posted staff to an updated facility with remote control locking systems and four posts, he wasn't sure the transition would be smooth. "I was afraid we might not grasp that we had something better," he admits.

The GSA encourages sheriffs and counties to operate a new jail before the inmates move in. For this dry run, Lemacks writes a new policy and procedure manual and post orders. Inmates also attend orientation sessions and get a new handbook. "Then we get into what I call transition training. We teach evacuation procedures and post orders," says Lemacks. "It normally takes, in a small jail, six to eight weeks. In a large jail, 90 to 120 days." Staff needs time to get used to the new layout, electronics and regulations. "You have more problems with



The elevated control tower provides sightlines to all the jail's housing units. The control panel is mounted on a pedestal to make room for the view window in the floor, allowing an officer to view the sallyport below.

the staff who have been around a while. They resist change. That's when you invite the sheriff to step in and say a few words," Lemacks says. "You also spend a lot of time with the people the sheriff has just hired, and you make sure they don't pick up the bad habits of the older jailers. After a while, they figure out that, even though it's harder work, it's a safer place to be in."

"For about six weeks, my staff ran the jail every day just as though we had people here," Chapman reports. "They could get used to everything. They knew where the doors were and which button to push. Which door to open, which door not to open. Every person in a post knew what to do and it went as smooth as clockwork."

Ensuring the facility itself is holding

up, Pieper O'Brien Herr recently completed the 11-month walk-through that is part of Banks County's warranty contract with R. W. Allen & Associates, the construction manager. The architecture firm is also preparing plans for its fifth project using this prototype in Georgia.

The facility has now been in operation for a year. Bill Lemacks, meanwhile, is directing a transition elsewhere. "Our consultants are invaluable, especially in rural counties," says Oliver Hunter, GSA general consul. "They're on the road almost all the time, going from one county to the next."•



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Correctional Profile

The Justice Studio of Pieper O'Brien Herr Architects (POH) has not only been a part of the trends in the planning and design of correctional facilities in Georgia, but has pioneered numerous innovations such as the small jail prototype. We apply this extensive experience and knowledge to creatively solve our client's problems. As professionals dedicated to the correctional industry, we are very familiar with the issues facing communities today from the initial ability to fund capital construction projects to operational issues such as direct and indirect inmate supervision management.

