

CALFOCUS: EL CAJON

El Cajon's Public Safety Center to be a new concept in police service

By Alice Keyser
FOR THE EAST COUNTY CALIFORNIAN

Still under construction, the new building with the large circular structure at 100 Civic Center Way in the city of El Cajon will be known as the "Public Safety Center." Its entrance will be near Rea Street, what has been dubbed the art center of the city.

However, the building will not house artists and their works of art. When completed sometime in the summer of this year, it will serve as the new police headquarters of El Cajon.

The Public Safety Center is a new concept in name and in the traditional functions of the police department in El Cajon — it will provide services and facilities not previously provided. One of the facilities within the building will include the Emergency

Operations Center (EOC).

According to Lieutenant Mark Coit, officer of internal affairs at the El Cajon Police Department, the EOC will serve as the base of operations for the heads of public agencies involved in safety and emergency response. In the case of a city- or county-wide emergency such as fires, earthquakes, floods or any other types of disasters, the chief of police, the fire chief, the city manager, public works, and perhaps the Red Cross, FEMA and any other relevant personnel, will converge at the center to study the problem, strategize on its solution and then decide on a course of action. The EOC will contain the state-of-the-art equipment necessary for responding to such emergencies.

The safety center will also include a community meeting room and classrooms. According to Kathi Henry, city manager,

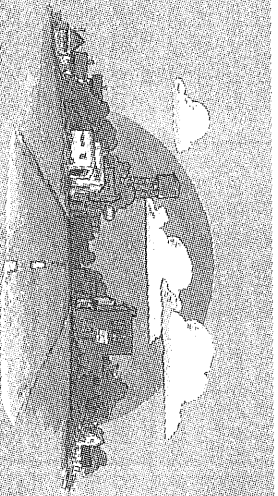
the primary function of the meeting room is to "operate as the EOC."

Public meetings pertaining to law enforcement affairs, public forums and any other city-sponsored events will also be held in the meeting room.

The police department will offer "Citizens' Academy" classes where the citizens of El Cajon can learn about disaster preparedness, neighborhood watch, police forensics, detective investigations and other safety related subjects. These classes will be taught by volunteer police officers.

A five-story structure, the Public Safety Center will be approximately 119,400 square feet of space and 212,750 square feet of parking.

It will accommodate space for administrative and operations personnel for all divisions of the police departments. According



Around Town

Nudo's Pharmacy

By Nancy J. Lewis
SPECIAL TO THE EAST COUNTY CALIFORNIAN

For over 45 years there has been a pharmacy located in downtown El Cajon at 455 N. Magnolia Ave., operating through the years under various names and ownerships such as UniMart, 2 Guys and UniMed. It became known as Nudo's Pharmacy in 1987 when P. J. Nudo purchased the business.

The only pharmacy now in downtown El Cajon, Nudo's offers skin care and personal care products, over-the-counter medicines and first aid products at the front of the store with the pharmacy located at the rear. "People like to go to a retail pharmacy like ours because of the personal service," Nudo explained. "We're willing to help our customers and their doctors. Customers aren't just a number to us, and we do our best to get you the drug therapy your doctor wants you to have."

Nudo and his partner, Paula Kreder, are proud of their personalized customer service.

Nudo's Pharmacy is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., closed Saturday and Sunday. You can reach them by phone at (619) 442-0303.

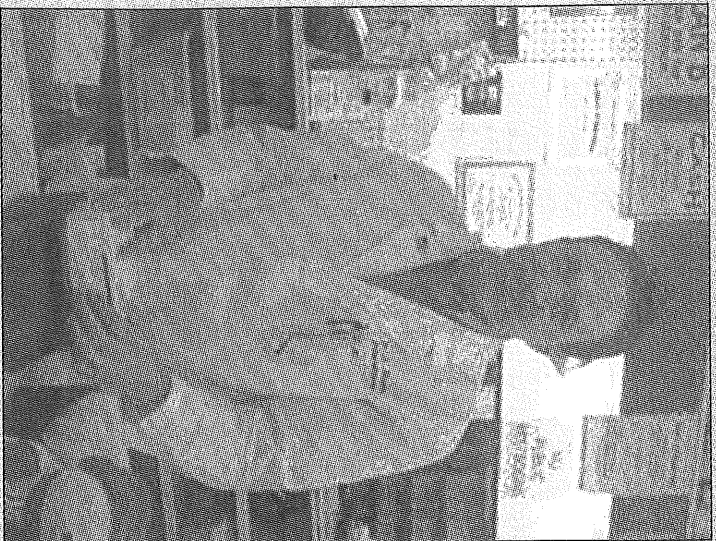


Photo by Nancy Lewis
P.J. Nudo has owned the downtown locations since 1987.

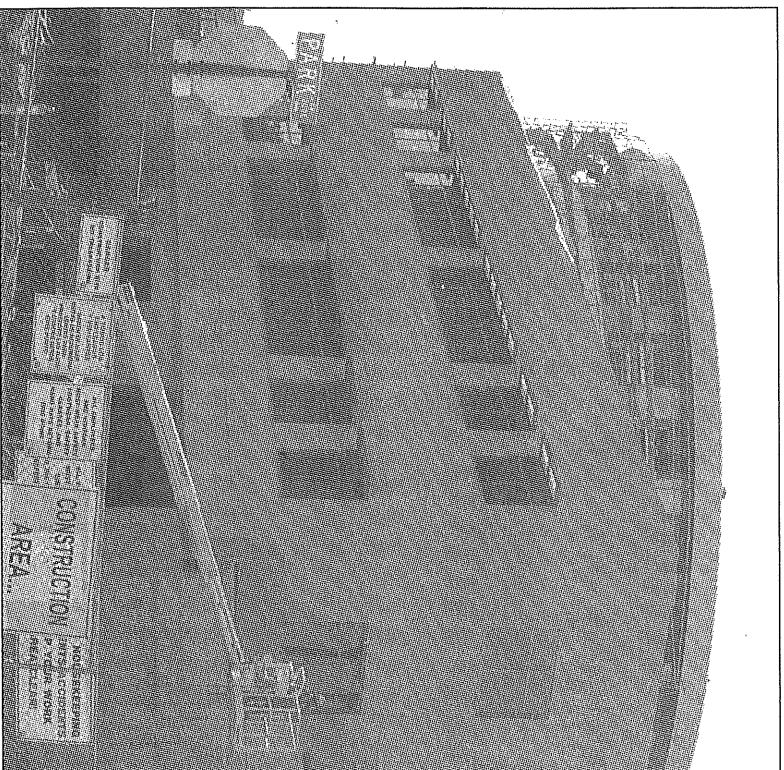


Photo by Christopher Coburn

The Public Safety Center in downtown El Cajon is expected to be completed in the summer of this year and is currently within its budget.

To Coit, the new building will provide sufficient space to house, for the first time in many years, the traffic division, the detective unit and the special investigations unit, and will bring them together all in one building. Presently, these divisions are operating in leased buildings on Pioneer Way and at Wells Park.

The building will also contain an up-to-date communications center, a central data center, crime laboratory, indoor firing range, a short-term custody facility and more. There will be a total of 10 holding cells in the custody facility. However, prisoners will not be held long-term. The facility will only serve as a processing center and any prisoners that needs to be detained longer will be booked in a county jail facility.

Sergeant Eric Taylor from the El Cajon Police Department, who oversees the operations of the Public Safety Center during its construction, explained that the holding cells will be located in a U-shape interior building that is not visible from the outside. It will be a building within a building and will not have windows.

"The building is gorgeous and taxpayers will be very pleased with the final product," stated Taylor. He added, "It is a green building and meets the LEEDS (leadership, energy and environmental design) standards." Funding for the construction

of the Public Safety Center is provided under Proposition O, which was approved by the taxpayers of El Cajon in 2004. The proposition provides for a one-half cent sales increase in El Cajon for a period of 10 years, the revenues of which are mandated for improving and building public safety facilities, which includes the new police station/Public Safety Center.

The construction contract for the Public Safety Center was awarded to Ledcor Construction by the El Cajon City Council for \$40 million. Plans and specifications were developed by KMA Architecture and Engineering.

According to Coit, the safety center was designed and equipped for future functions. It was built to accommodate the anticipated growth for the next 30 to 40 years. He stated he hoped the growth of the city and business did not include an increase in fires and crime. Presently, the police department of El Cajon provides protection and other services to a city population of approximately 100,000.

The cost comparison between the safety center of El Cajon, the new La Mesa police station and Santee's police protection services shows the Public Safety Center being ahead of the pack in high construction costs and other expenses. Henry said that the project budget is \$68 million

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