



**STATION DESIGN** by David Arends

## Renovate or Build New: Bridging the Gap Between Design and Function

Consideration of a station's past, present and future is important no matter which route is selected.



**DAVID S. ARENDS**, AIA OAA, is the owner, chairman, CEO and visionary of CR architecture + design, which is a national architecture firm that specializes in public safety commercial, K-12 education, hospitality and housing, among others. He has worked with fire departments across the United States since 1998 to economically address physical and tactical training needs through innovative designs. Arends combines his technical knowledge with his strong business insights to strategically seek new ways to enhance facilities. His distinguished architecture career spans almost 40 years.



Being open to change—embracing resilient and flexible design—must be included in a decision as to whether to renovate or build new. Key aspects of the Des Moines, IA, Fire Department's logistics and training center, including the apparatus and maintenance bays and training spaces, were designed to be easily altered for future growth and augmentation. PHOTOS COURTESY OF CR ARCHITECTURE + DESIGN

**T**here are known knowns. These are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns. That is to say, we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns, the ones we don't know we don't know.—Donald Rumsfeld

At a recent conference for fire chiefs, at least a dozen times, participants said that the moment to decide to renovate an existing firehouse or to build a new station is accompanied by a high level of stress. Part of that involved the questions, "Where do we begin?", "How could we prepare to understand the design process?" and "Who do we need to get involved for decisions?"

Architects know best how to design a building, and firefighters know best how a fire station functions. Integrating those knowledge bases is the key to success. The more information, insight, and concerns that are shared early and often, the better that the two groups can transform what isn't known into a known, and the more that the stress level will dissolve.

Every instance of communication is an opening for collaboration, to build trust within the teams, and to ultimately, create a station that looks good, feels right and functions ideally for decades.

How is this achieved?  
Understanding how each region is unique and how each department represents the people that it serves is

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*"Doing something that you never did before, such as renovating or building a new fire station, might appear quite daunting. (with CR's Public Safety Architectural and Design expertise you work with) ...a team that's committed to listening, learning and building trust throughout the entire process. And (together) enable the creation of the station that your department and your community deserve."*

- David Arends, AIA OAA, chairman + ceo + visionary  
CR architecture + design

