

# Modest but muscular

NYPD tow pound goes for  
LEED, sense of identity

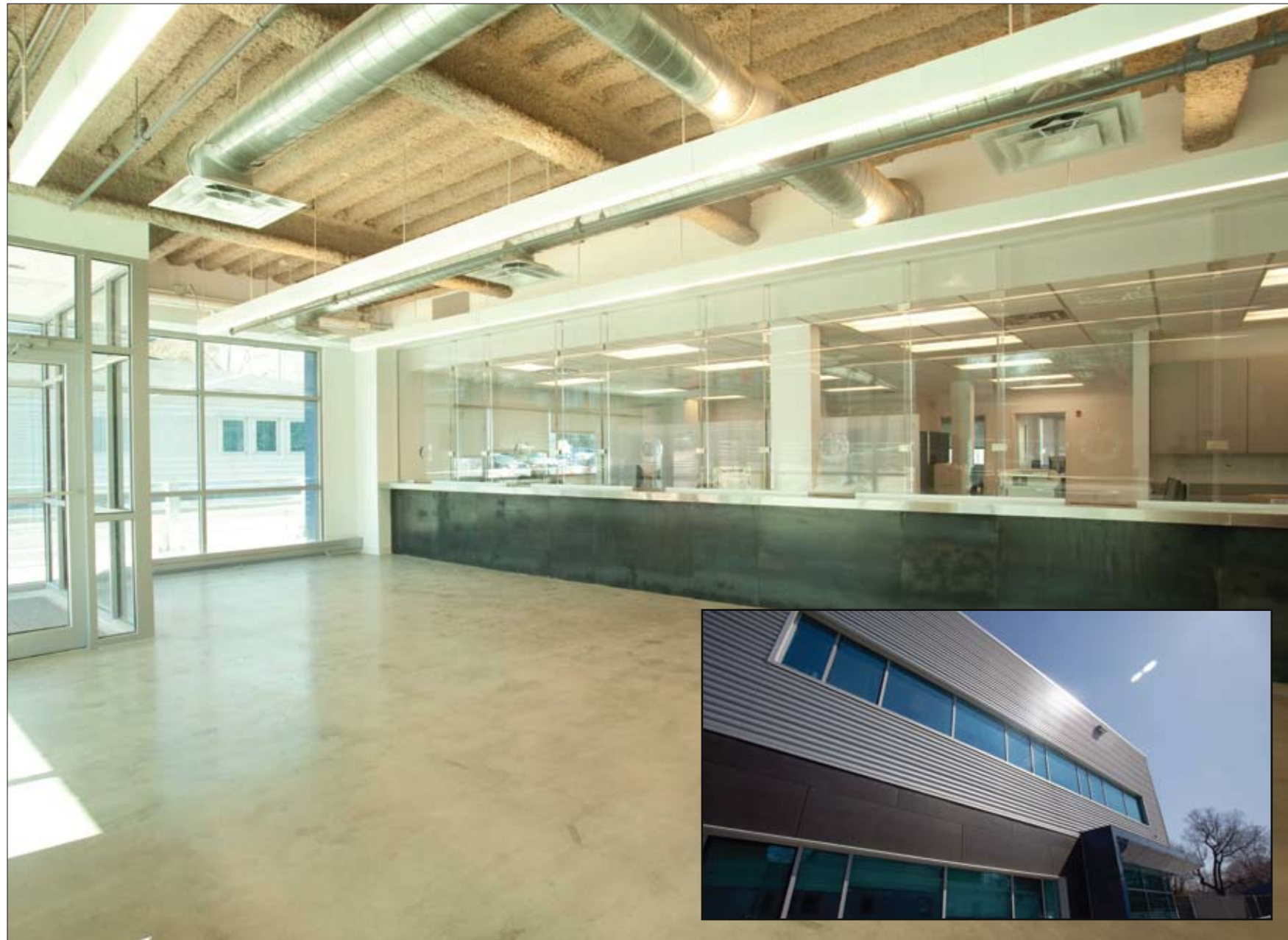
By Stefan Schumacher

As bad as it feels to find out your car has been towed, what makes it that much worse is the thought of the dark, scary place you'll need to go to pick it up. You're standing there staring at an empty parking space, conjuring up visions of barbed wire fences and rabid dogs. Yes, a trip to the tow pound is right up there with the DMV or maybe the dentist ...for a root canal.

The New York City Police Department's Tow Pound Operations Building located at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, completed in April 2009, is a substantial step up from the typical vehicle redemption center. The two-story, 11,000-square-foot (1,022-m<sup>2</sup>) facility was designed for a LEED Silver certification from the U.S. Green Building Council—it's one of the first LEED projects for the NYPD—and may ultimately receive a Gold rating. The previous facility was located in double-wide trailers for years, so the new building was meant to have a sense of permanence and identity.

"Quite often in the past these projects would be overlooked in favor of the simplest, easiest thing you could put up," said Project Architect Marc Gordon of Spacesmith LLP, New York. "The tow pound is not a place you want to visit





### Rainscreen Technology

The north and south building walls consist of a structural 6-inch (152-mm) stud wall with 5/8-inch (16-mm) sheetrock on the inside face with 6 inches of batt insulation and gypsum sheathing covered by a vapor permeable air barrier and CENTRIA metal panels.

The east and west walls consist of a structural 6-inch stud wall with 5/8-inch sheetrock on the inside face with 6 inches of batt insulation and gypsum sheathing covered by a vapor permeable air barrier, 2 inches (51 mm) of Midland, Mich.-based Dow Building Solutions' extruded polystyrene rigid insulation board and concrete panels mounted on metal stud framework. The thickness of the walls contribute to the high R-value and the rainscreen walls offer pressure equalization in order to deter rainwater intrusion.

and people get very irate paying tickets, but we wanted it to be a little more pleasant. We wanted a facility that had a real sense of place; the NYPD would have pride in their facility. We were not only designing it for the customers but for the people who work there."

### Robust Pride

"We wanted to give them something that was more permanent than what they had. We also wanted the identity of the building to be known," Gordon said.

"NYPD" super graphics on the front of the building leave no doubt about the identity of the structure. The letters are made from perforated, corrugated stainless steel from Moon Township, Pa.-based CENTRIA.

According to Gordon, the lettering mimics the rest of the building, because of the 7,000 square feet (650 m<sup>2</sup>) of painted corrugated metal siding on the front and back of the building, also from CENTRIA.

"There's a certain industrial language to the Navy yard," Gordon said. "They built ships there and we wanted a building that related to the language of the Navy yard as an industrial center."

The Tow Pound Operations Building has a robust steel moment frame structure, designed to support loads in excess of what was really needed. Gordon said one of the goals of the project was to create a building that could be used for other purposes should the NYPD move out, as well as a facility that would be of use during times of emergency.

"For instance, during 9/11 they were looking for places to have command centers," Gordon said.

### Sustainable By Law

Based on a green building law enacted in New York City in 2005, new municipal buildings are required to comply with the USGBC's LEED requirements, so there was no question that the tow pound facility would be energy efficient.

"New York City wants to be on the forefront of sustainable initiatives, making sure anything they do in the future is green," Gordon said. "It's good news for the environment, it's good news for architects, and metal figures into that because of the ability for metal to be recycled over and over again. The use of metal in the building certainly helped achieve a Silver certification. Every city will be doing this."

"The design enhances the presence of the police facility for the city and perhaps takes the edge off for the people who have to come there to retrieve their cars."


The steel frame of the tow pound building is highly recyclable and a large percentage of the metal used in the building is from recycled content. Additionally, the "NYPD Blue" canopy that hangs over the front entrance is made from painted aluminum panels.

Other sustainable features include low-E tinted windows from Kawneer, Norcross, Ga., throughout the building; closed loop solar collectors for the building's hot water; energy-efficient boilers; low-flush plumbing fixtures; and extensive use of daylighting—all the spaces have windows so light penetrates into the building. There is also a PVC roofing membrane from Johns-Manville, Denver, which reflects light and reduces heat gain.

Spacesmith incorporated new technology, as well, with highly insulated walls that raise the facility's R-value and a pressure equalized rainscreen wall system (see sidebar) that prevents wind driven rainwater intrusion.

### Taking the Edge Off

Despite its sustainable technology and strong appearance, the tow pound is a still a modest building, Gordon said. The designers purposefully avoided expensive detailing because this is a tax-payer funded project.

However, the design enhances the presence of the police facility for the city and perhaps takes the edge off for the people who have to come there to retrieve their cars. Rather than wearily wandering up to a trailer, they're waiting in an environmentally friendly, modern industrial facility. And while that may be a small consolation for people who have had their cars towed, at least the bold lettering on the front and the built-to-last design make it easy to find. 

### NYPD Tow Pound Operations Building, Brooklyn, N.Y.

**Owner:** Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corp.

**Tenant:** New York City Police Department

**Architect:** Spacesmith LLP, New York

**Metal cladding:** CENTRIA, Moon Township, Pa., [www.centria.com](http://www.centria.com)

**Steel studs:** Dietrich Metal Framing, Columbus, Ohio, [www.dietrichindustries.com](http://www.dietrichindustries.com)

**Structural steel supplier:** Koenig Iron Works, Long Island City, N.Y., [www.koenigironworks.com](http://www.koenigironworks.com)

**Windows & storefront:** Kawneer, Norcross, Ga., [www.kawneer.com](http://www.kawneer.com)

**Glazing:** Viracon, Owatonna, Minn., [www.viracon.com](http://www.viracon.com)

**PVC roofing:** Johns-Manville, Denver, [www.jm.com](http://www.jm.com)

**Solar collectors:** Viessmann Manufacturing Co., Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, [www.viessmann.us](http://www.viessmann.us)

**Rainscreen insulation:** Dow Building Solutions, Midland, Mich., [www.building.dow.com](http://www.building.dow.com)