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EDS Builders presents Columbia Heights with award for public safety center

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The successful completion of the new public safety facility in Columbia Heights has led to a significant award and the reaffirmation of community pride.

EDS Builders, Inc., received a national award for its construction management of the Columbia Heights Public Safety Center, as announced at the Dec. 13 City Council meeting.

The Construction Management Association of America selected EDS Builders in the category of buildings, new construction with a value less than \$10 million. More than 130 entries were submitted for this year's program, and the final 15 winners were honored at a banquet this fall in San Diego.

A study presented to the City Council in December 2007 concluded that due to the growth of expanded services and the needs of police and fire departments in the 21st century, both departments had outgrown their facilities at City Hall. A groundbreaking ceremony was held Aug. 26, 2008, and the new project was completed 32 days ahead of schedule. The 47,000-square-foot public safety building on 41st Avenue N.E. opened Oct. 3, 2009.

EDS recommended an ambitious phased bid program that enabled all earthwork to be completed before the ground froze and the snow fell, which resulted in more than \$548,000 in savings. That cost savings went toward enhancements such as street lighting, sidewalks, front entrance benches and sound insulation in offices.

At the Dec. 13 council meeting, Doc Smith, president of EDS Builders, presented copies of the award to the City Council and City Manager Walt Fehst. Awards had also been previously presented to the police department, fire department and Buetow and Associates Inc., the company that designed the public safety center.

Smith said he shared the award that EDS received because he wanted to recognize the teamwork, insight and commitment that city leaders and staff exhibited through the construction process.

"I don't look at it as just a building," he said. "It's the life of the community."

"It's clearly the best project that I have ever been associated with," said City Manager Fehst. "I really enjoyed my opportunity to work with [Doc]. It's been a wonderful experience."

"I'm really proud of that building," said Fire Chief Gary Gorman. "We're on the right track for this community."

Police Chief Scott Nadeau said it's a "beautiful" building that will serve the city well into the future.

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