



Satellite Police Station

A Public Initiative Project



Satellite Police Station, Satellite Road, Ahmedabad

In 2005, the Ahmedabad Nagrik Police Utkarsh Samiti, under the leadership of Manubhai Patel raised funds through donations and constructed the Satellite Police station at a cost of Rs 90 lacs.

Our Vaastuyogam team met Mr. Manubhai Patel and Mr. Mukund Patel, Chairman and Vice Chairman respectively of the Ahmedabad Nagrik Police Utkarsh Samiti. In the article below, they elaborate on this unique and successful experiment of reducing stress experienced by the public in their face-to-face interaction with the police at the police station.

Before the Satellite Police station was shifted here, it was located in utterly cramped and depressing premises on the first and second floors of a small building opposite the Jhansi ki Rani Statue. The situation was truly chaotic and deplorable when genteel law-abiding folk had to visit the station for police verification whilst applying for a passport, and other work. When we witnessed these appalling scenes repeatedly, we decided to act.

We wanted to have a police station that would be impressive and comfortable; that would be neither domineering nor oppressive. It had to be functionally grand yet retain a demeanor of simplicity. The idea was to dismantle the initial fear of the public when they visit a police station; to improve the quality of the built space with the hope that it would “soften” the experience of interaction with police at the police station. To state the matter emphatically, we wanted the police station not to look like a police

station. Most of all, we wanted the law-abiding people to be unafraid of a police station.

To begin with, we nine founding members of The Ahmedabad Nagrik Police Utkarsh Samiti, donated Rs. One lac each. Well-wishers we approached for donations discouraged us. The idea that, having any truck with the police would lead to trouble was foremost on every donor’s mind. They advised us to collect money for a more

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'nobler' cause like making an orphanage or temple or a shelter for the old and destitute. The idea of building a police station from public donations seemed weird and wasteful! We were not discouraged – in fact the doubts of the would-be donors only strengthened our resolve. We explained that having a pleasant police station was a worthwhile civic cause and responsibility of well-meaning citizens. We explained and explained, until finally we started finding people who believed our cause and us.

The idea of the project took shape when the then Deputy Commissioner of Police (Zone 1) Mr. Ajay Tomar suggested that we should help build a 'deserving' police station at Satellite Road. Home Minister Amit Shah also agreed. Real momentum gathered for the project after Mr. Surendra Patel – the then Chairman of AUDA – moved heaven and earth to get a vacant plot allotted to the Police Home department, who in turn allowed us to construct the police station. The project finally took off when both architect Bhaskar Nirula who had designed Manubhai Patel's Wide Angle theatre at S.G. Road and structural engineer R.G. Desai agreed to do the design job of the police station free of cost.

Now that our work is done, the Satellite Police Station premises have undergone a sea change. The new premises are tidy, airy, spacious and - we daresay - welcoming. We have had study teams from Punjab, Rajasthan, and M.P who have visited this police station as a model case. All of them have been mightily impressed. And, yes, people going to the Satellite Police Station are not afraid to set foot in it. They find it soothing and are proud of it. They find it unbelievable that they are at a police station.

The Satellite Police Station is the first - and as far as we know the only successful initiative of this kind. There are other similar attempts, too, but we believe that the Satellite Police Station stands head and shoulders taller in terms of design, construction quality, routine maintenance and cleanliness.

To learn about how he designed the police station, we met with architect Bhaskar Nirula

Excerpts from the interview:-

My one and only condition when I accepted the assignment for designing the Satellite Police Station was that there should be no interference; that I should be allowed a free

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Architect Mr. Bhaskar Nirula

“As it stands today, I think we have achieved are objective of making a police station an approachable place that is easy on the eye and soft on the heart. The building provides a soothing setting for the people using it and the people visiting it.” - Bhaskar Nirula



Left to Right Mukund Patel, Manubhai Patel, the then Inspector of Police Mr. R. K. Patel who is now Additional Commissioner of Police & the then police commissioner of Mr. K. P. Kaushik On the day of Khatmuharat Of satellite police station



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hand to design. In addition, I extended this condition to the interiors as well, because these too were a part of my assignment.

I did not undertake any study tour or study session for designing the police station as I did not feel the need for it. I got the brief for designing the police station from the police department in the form of the activities they carried out in the police station and the designated rooms. Mr. Ajay Thomar did give a detailed idea of what were the expectations of the department.

There could not have been a local reference point, as this police station was to be the first of its kind. The only reference was a negative one. We all were clear we were NOT making the usual, horrible police station. Police stations are scary. They are dark, dingy places. They live up to the clichéd image of the police as unbridled bullies. That was the notion we were out to erase and to achieve our goals we knew quite perfectly what kind of a police station we were NOT making!

In the police station, the first thing I wanted to achieve was transparency. I wanted to ensure that as soon as one entered the police station, one sees the whole of it and would be able to grasp in the first few seconds what the whole show was.

This is exactly what happens in the Satellite Police Station. As soon as you enter it, you are in an open courtyard from where you can see the whole of the inside of the building. All the rooms face inwards to the courtyard and



Mr. Manubhai Patel, owner of Wide Angle Theater S.G. Road Ahmedabad & the President of the Ahmedabad Nagrik Police Utkarsh Samiti

can be seen in the first glimpse you get of the inside. This makes it very graspable and takes care of most of your pre-conceived suspicion and fear.

Apart from the transparency factor, I also wanted the place to be climatically suitable and to use locally available building materials. Budget restraints and other considerations prevented me from putting in fountains and green lawns at the entrance and having the rooms air-conditioned.

As it stands today, I think we have achieved are objective of making a police station an approachable place that is easy

on the eye and soft on the heart. The building provides a soothing setting for the people using it and the people visiting it.

I felt my biggest success with the police station was when I heard that people can't recognize the building as a police station and often miss it when they come looking for it. ■

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The then Police Commissioner, Mr. K. P. Kaushik (now retired) addressing the gathering on the inaugural function of the Satellite Police Station