

Fort Wayne Newspapers' press hall, modeled on the city's 19th-century train station, will be joined to the existing plant by a bridge in the style of a railroad trestle.

NEW PROCESS, PRESS & PLANT

Designing Fort Wayne Newspapers' 21st-century press hall for its 19th-century neighborhood

BY JIM ROSENBERG

FLEXOGRAPHY BOUGHT FORT WAYNE NEWSPAPERS INC. A LOT of time to keep printing in the same plant with much of the same equipment.

Next year, however, the Indiana joint operating agency will see construction of a building that will move its printing from one side of the street to the other, and from mid-20th-century letterpress to 21st-century offset lithography - in a press hall compatible with the neighborhood's 19th-century architecture.

Though flexo gave *The Journal Gazette* and *The News-Sentinel* a few pages of color capacity, I've known for some time that our current letterpress and flexo units are in need of replacement," says Mary Jacobus, president and CEO of the operating agency in Fort Wayne.

Jacobus also is publisher of Knight Ridder's afternoon *News-Sentinel*, where last December's audited average daily circulation of 34,326 represents a drop of 23,000 since 1987. In contrast, circulation at the Inskeep family's morning *Journal Gazette* rose by 5,000 copies, to 67,508, over the same period.

In May 2003, Knight Ridder's partnership interest in the joint operating agreement, was increased, however, from 55% to 75% and the JOA ex-

tended until 2050. Planning began that same year to support the arrangement running halfway to the next century. Knight Ridder is investing \$34.7 million



Fort Wayne Newspapers; new press hall will go up on the Main St. site of the lot and building (top left) west across Sherman Blvd. from its existing plant.

in a new, 47,000-square-foot facility and its equipment.

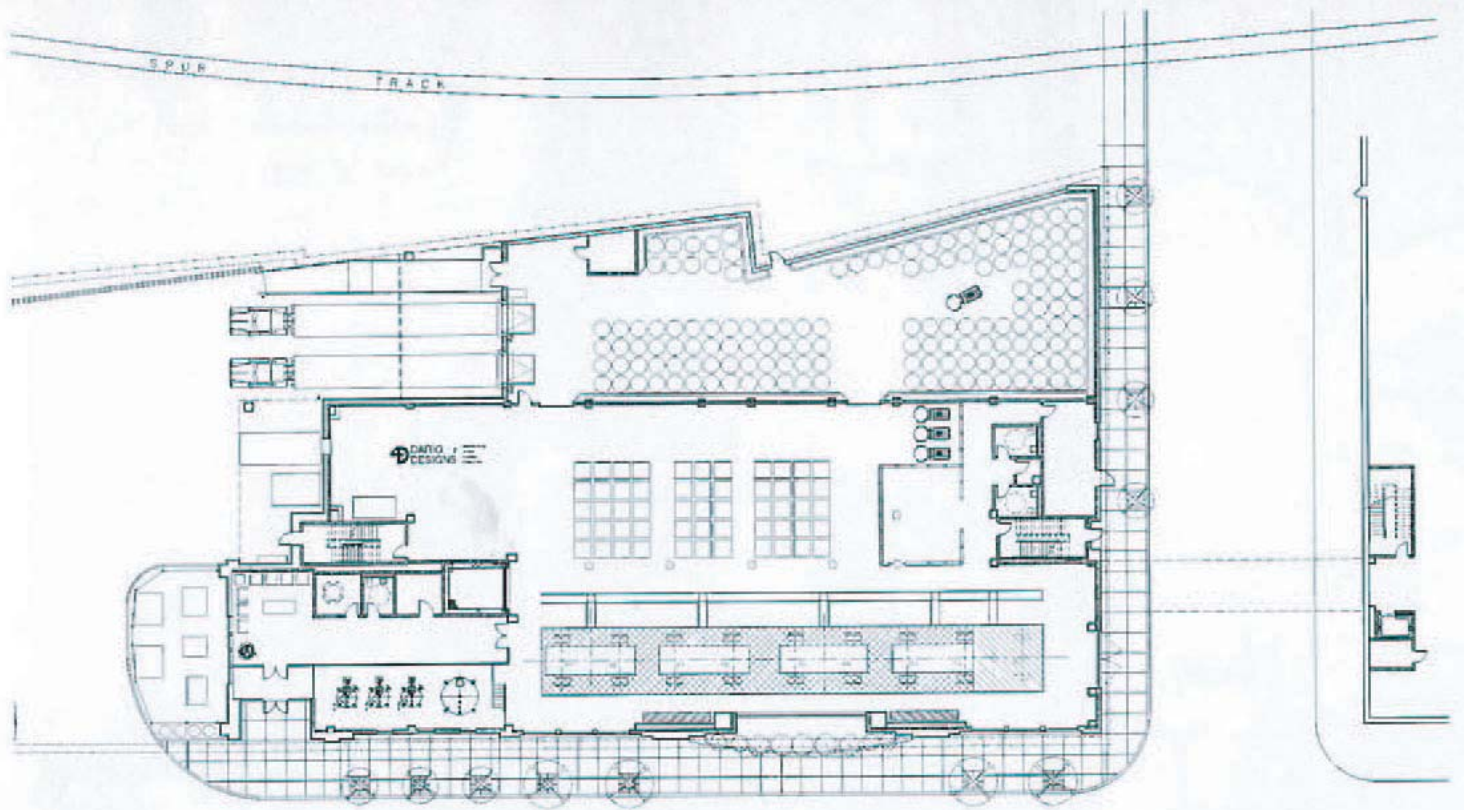
The structure will house platemaking, the pressroom, and a newsprint storage area. Equipment will consist primarily of an as-yet-unspecified computer-to-plate system and a doublewide, two-around press from Tokyo Kikai Seisakusho. JOA executives would not break out the price of the press.

Other than the relocation of platemaking and printing, the existing building's role is expected to remain unchanged. There are no plans yet for use of the space created when the old press is removed, according to Jacobus.

While Operations Vice President Phil Haggerty foresees no use for the old Goss letterpress, he says *The Charlotte* (N.C.) *Observer* and/or *Akron* (Ohio) *Beacon*

Journal may "have some interest in our flexo units for parts." (Knight Ridder's other flexo sites, in Georgia, Kansas, and Minnesota, use KBA/ Motter equipment.)

Dario Designs in Framingham, Mass., worked up a master plan for Fort Wayne Newspapers a couple of years ago, said Dario DiMare, the architectural firm's president. Project architect Dario Designs Vice President David



Floor plan of Fort Wayne Newspaper's new press hall. Clockwise from top: newsprint storage, roll-preparation, press, ink tanks, stairways and elevators, waste storage, and two tractor trailer delivery bays. The copy-conveyor and walkway to the existing building's mailroom is at lower right. Platemaking is on the second floor.

Hogan, adds, "We've been involved in every single aspect, since the earliest stages."

Relocate, rehab, or build?

At least two years ago, Jacobus recalls, the benefits and drawbacks of greenfield and downtown sites were being compared. "They've always done things methodically, but have always been ahead of the game," says DiMare.

"We really wanted to stay downtown," Jacobus adds. A greenfield site outside the city would have to have included a new mailroom, when in fact "our mailroom is in very good shape, [with] relatively new inserting equipment" she notes.

At the same time, the publisher adds, "it didn't make economic sense" to put a new press in the old pressroom. Using the existing pressroom, DiMare explains, would mean a more difficult, phased installation requiring, among other things: removal and reinstallation of conveyor without interrupting production and packaging; maintaining supplies of letterpress and flexo inks while installing tanks for litho inks; setting up and training on offset platesetting lines while still operating lines for letterpress and flexo plates; and somehow printing the papers while one press is erected and the other dismantled.

"It's very difficult to change the motor while you're driving the car," says DiMare.

More general he says, "adapting and renovating" are a big job when no part of the existing plant, from the concrete slab up, was designed for a new tower press. The plant may have been the very best for its purpose when new, DiMare says, but "the building is inappropriate for the new technologies."

Dealing with all that means that "a year-and-a-half project becomes three years," he adds. Further, when working in an existing building's available space, the equipment, storage, offices - almost anything - often have to be placed in locations that are not necessarily the most efficient or convenient.

Putting the press across the street, says DiMare, allowed the project to be done right in sufficient space. And, all costs considered, a new building can be less expensive than a rehab, he says. As always, his firm ran the numbers for both options, and the figures were very close.

"It happens a lot," DiMare says, adding that usually "if the numbers are even close," a rehab "is absurd" from a purely practical point of view, although there are sometimes good business reasons for staying in an existing building (or making use of another).

Hogan calls the bridge needed in Fort Wayne to connect the new and existing buildings "a compromise, but the only

one that makes sense." The bridge over the street has a walkway under the printed-copy conveyor, allowing foot traffic and access for maintenance, but not a plant's usual traffic, such as forklifts.

As long as the bridge must be there, says DiMare, it will be made as attractive as possible. The bridge borrows from the look of a railroad trestle. "The building itself is a takeoff on a historic railway station in downtown Fort Wayne," says Hogan.

State makes it pay to stay

In addition to a design decision, putting a new press hall on a new site required selecting, buying, and preparing the property.

Fort Wayne Newspapers announced in February that it would do just that on adjacent parcels occupied by a parking lot it owns and a four-story building, used only for storage, that it bought from a nearby hospital and will demolish. Its investment was supported by legislation passed in the spring that provided a property-tax deduction for businesses that build or expand within an Urban Enterprise Zone.

The law goes well beyond abatements granted by the city in the form of phased imposition of additional taxes on new or enlarged facilities. Instead of relieving a business of half the extra tax over the first 10 years, the new law eliminates the extra

tax entirely for that period, though it does require the business “to pay 20% of its savings to the Urban Enterprise Zone and 1% to the state” - still saving the business 79% of what it would otherwise pay in higher taxes for 10 years, according to a Journal Gazette report.

“We’re one of the first to take advantage of it,” Jacobus says of the new tax incentive. In fact, among projects that fall within the mayor’s “Build Fort Wayne” initiative, also announced in February, only Verizon’s citywide fiber-optic cabling amounts to a bigger investment.

Fort Wayne Newspapers was granted the tax abatement in June, slicing approximately \$2.8 million from its taxes. For its part, the city keeps a business with a \$17.8 million payroll covering 427 full-time and 50 part-time employees.

Newspaper as neighbor

The newspapers are headquartered at a point where the taller downtown buildings “transition to an early-20th-century residential neighborhood,” says Hogan, who calls it an attractive area where residents take great pride in their homes.

“Only six, seven blocks from dead-center downtown,” and just two blocks from city hall, “we’re across the street from the historic West Central neighborhood,” Haggerty says. Because the site is within a historic area with old, architecturally significant homes, he continues, “some of those exterior aspects [were applied] to our building.”

The original design possessed some characteristics that were “pretty modern and daring-looking,” says Hogan. Among them was a large blue window in each of three different but related functional areas, corresponding to the three rivers of “Summit City,” as the early transport hub became known, thanks to its elevation along the Wabash-Erie Canal.

“That was too contemporary for the folks downtown,” DiMare says, adding that his client “was very, very sensitive to the people in the community.”

Following a study of photographs of the neighborhood over the past 100 years, a new design emerged, one on “a much more human scale,” says DiMare, rather than the monumental scale seen in some cities and some newspaper plants. For example, the masonry building’s entrances will be the same sort of 3-foot-by-7-foot doors found on many of the area’s houses.

He adds, “You want to have the scale and feel of a big building in a small community.” The size and large front window-typical of a 19th-century city train station are “very well suited to showcasing the press in a downtown environment,” says Hogan. “We ended up with a fairly retro-looking building.”

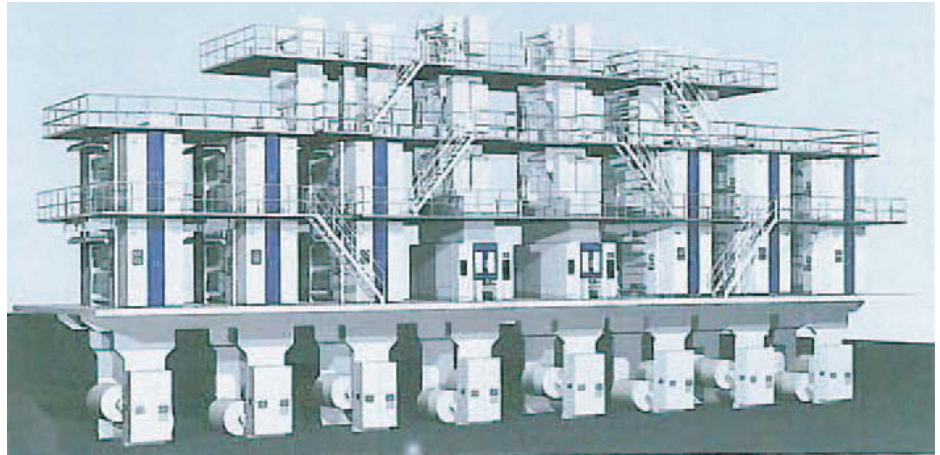


Illustration of a six-tower, two-folder TKS ColorTop 7000 press line similar to the one that Fort Wayne Newspapers will install in its new press hall in Indiana.

Haggerty says, “This will be a dramatic, dynamic building for Main Street, Fort Wayne.” Whereas the existing building rises from 30 feet in the paper storage area to 50 feet at the press bay, the new press hall will reach to 85 feet, most of that required to house the four-high tower press and its superstructure.

Though “smaller than we would have liked,” says Hogan, the property did not seriously constrain the building’s size. After a long process of explaining the need for a taller building that also would exceed the required setback, variances were granted.

The sites’ size, however, will change one thing. Railroad tracks run along the north sides of both the existing and new buildings, but although the JOA receives the majority of its newsprint by rail, Haggerty, when the new press is operating, “we will receive all our newsprint by truck.” The reason, he says, is the building’s tight fit into little more than an acre, where a design to offload newsprint by rail “would take [away] a significant amount of storage.”

With the prospect of a “giant box right up against the sidewalk,” says Hogan, care

was taken to soften its look, especially the side facing the residential area. The facade uses plenty of glass, brick, and Indiana limestone.

Groundbreaking will hardly mark the beginning of work on the new press hall. Before it begins, the unused building must be razed and the debris removed. Even after that, site work will be extensive. A considerable volume of material must be excavated and the site refilled with more compactable soil to better hold the footings and provide stable support for the 1,200-ton press.

“In most cases with a downtown [site] you have to do that,” says DiMare. Sampling showed that much of what underlies the site is old construction debris, said Haggerty.

Raze, build, erect, commission

Site preparation starts after the planned Nov. 1 demolition of the unused building. Construction contracts are to be awarded in mid-December, with work beginning that month or next and to be 99% complete by the end of 2006. Press erection is tentatively slated to begin in January of 2007, and commissioning six months later, said Haggerty.

The completed installation will consist of six TKS ColorTop 7000CDH eight-couple towers, two single-out 2:5:5 folders in the center of the line, eight support-style reelstands, and T-NPC controls.

Design of the press hall provides for the future addition of another reelstand and tower.

Fort Wayne’s 85,000-copy-per-hour ColorTop 7000 will be designed for a 21-inch cut-off and 48-inch web width.

The tower on each end of the line will be configured to run two webs, and the press as a whole will be capable of split production, with a web from one side able to run to the folder on the other, according



Fort Wayne Newspapers’ current letterpress and flexo press line as it appears from an observation deck.

to Haggerty and TKS (USA.) Inc. National Sales Manager Mike Shafer.

Of all the TKS installations throughout North America, Fort Wayne will be the first to use the press manufacturer's own spray-bar dampeners, according to Shafer. The printing couples will be equipped with a blanket-washing system from Oxy-Dry Corp. Newsprint rolls will be stripped, weighed, and prepared, by hand, although "there are provisions for automatic roll handling" in the future, Shafer says.

Inking will be preset from density values at the raster image processor that drives the platesetter. A decision on the latter is about a year away, which will enable operations to learn about and evaluate whatever may then be the latest CTP technology according to Haggerty.

Fort Wayne will not equip the press with a color-register system, relying instead on the shaftless drive for quick and accurate register adjustment and on TKS anti-fanout technology, says Haggerty.

The equipment the ColorTop will replace comprises 50-year-old Goss Mark I letterpress with four units of MAN Roland flexo that were installed 26 years ago in the place of two letterpress units on each end of the original 12-unit Goss press line.

"We're long overdue" says Haggerty, noting that when running in straight production mode, the current press can print only four pages in flexo color.



View of Wayne Street homes, two blocks from Fort Wayne Newspapers. St. Joseph's Hospital (top, right) is diagonally across Main Street from the newspapers' headquarters.



The new press, he adds, will allow production of a 64-page edition with 32 pages in full color and another 32 in black with one spot color - "a significant improvement for our readers and our advertisers."

The change to offset lithography on a modern color press, says Haggerty will require "a massive training effort on our part" for press, imaging, and design staff. The plan is to begin training before the end of this year. So that press operators

become familiar with the equipment and the process and not be "overwhelmed" when the new equipment arrives, they will make some daytrips to other sites and visit TKS's latest new-press installation — the one-around doublewide at Salt Lake City's Newspaper Agency Corp.

Not only another TKS user, NAC also is another JOA and another Dario Designs client. Further, it's operations are led by Vice President Bob Burns, whom Haggerty has known for 20 years and who has

managed Detroit's offset and Charlotte's Flexo pressrooms during that time. Press type and printing process are both new, Fort Wayne will hold classroom-style training at the outset. TKS will provide training on-site and, for

several key personnel, in Japan, IT personnel also will train on the modern press electronics. Training assistance in another form will come from another source: The city has pledged \$60,000 toward training costs - \$20,000 per year for three years.

"That has been a big help, budget-wise", says Haggerty. "We are looking to use that money in a significant way to improve the skill sets of our employees." ■