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**Travis County Medical Examiner’s New Office, designed by SmithGroupJJR, opens in Austin**

***New $28 million building, triple the size of prior facility, features design that strives to bring positive public awareness to forensic science***

AUSTIN, Texas, March 5, 2018 – The new, $28 million [Travis County Medical Examiner’s Office](https://www.traviscountytx.gov/medical-examiner), designed by SmithGroupJJR, opened in Austin, Texas on January 22, 2018. The 52,000-square-foot building, more than three times larger than the prior facility, features the latest technological advancements in the industry, all inside a premier work environment.

SmithGroupJJR’s design of [the modern, two-story building](http://www.smithgroupjjr.com/projects/travis-county-medical-examiner-s-office-building#.Wph7pujwZaQ), located northeast of downtown Austin, provides for advanced investigation, morgue, autopsy, and laboratory spaces. With a total of nine autopsy stations – a dramatic increase from only three at the prior location – it is expected that the forensic team will be able to effectively manage the caseload.

“This new state-of-the art facility allows us to use the most advanced technologies and efficient processes to provide high-quality medicolegal death investigation,” said J. Keith Pinckard, M.D.,Ph.D., Chief Medical Examiner for Travis County.

In addition to the improvements in function and workflow, SmithGroupJJR’s design delivers a civic building with an iconic presence and a strong, urban edge on the street. A striking front door respectfully welcomes families and visitors, while staff have their own secure front door, a shaded terrace, and garden outside of an investigations suite. Inside, staff benefit from abundant natural light and openness, with views to the surrounding landscape outside.

“Nine times out of ten, medical examiner offices are unfortunately in dark and windowless, fortress-like buildings. For Travis County’s new facility, we wanted employees to have an ideal, highly secure, world-class work environment while the building enhances Austin’s street life and embraces high-performance, green design,” said SmithGroupJJR Design Director [Mark Kranz,](http://www.smithgroupjjr.com/people/mark-kranz) FAIA, LEED AP BD+C, who served as design principal for project.

Added Kranz, “When a building’s design accomplishes these goals, it naturally becomes a representative of community pride. In this case, we’re confident the new building will bring positive public awareness to forensic science. We feel the new Travis County Medical Examiner’s office will elevate the expectation of what a forensic facility can and should be.”

**Advanced Technology**

The new office, equipped with the latest advances in technology, is one of only a few medical examiner’s offices in North America to have a computed tomography (CT) scanner. As a result, pathologists will have an option to conduct a CT scan to either augment, or in some cases, even supplant an autopsy. Other new features include larger labs for the office’s toxicology group and five observation decks above the autopsy rooms. Visiting families are provided with their own private waiting rooms.

**Flexibility for the Future**

Part of creating the ideal Medical Examiner’s office was designing a flexible building, able to adjust to changing needs for space and technology. [Travis County](https://www.traviscountytx.gov/) anticipates a 40% population growth in the next 30 years, which is expected to result in a need for higher capacity.

“The building is designed to adapt with the changing needs of its forensic scientists, doing so without slowing down their work,” said SmithGroupJJR Director of Laboratory Planning [Adam Denmark](http://www.smithgroupjjr.com/people/adam-denmark)**,** AIA, LEED AP BD+C.

For example, lab benches and instrumentation are mobile and can be reconfigured as casework needs change. Storage capacity in the morgue can double by changing the storage strategy. A combined receiving and releasing body cooler space with a moveable barrier can adjust with capacity needs.

**Sensitive to its Environment**

To support the county’s sustainability initiatives, progressive energy and water conservation strategies were incorporated into SmithGroupJJR’s holistic design. Other green design features include highly efficient mechanical and electrical systems that will minimize energy usage such as LED lighting and daylight harvesting controls, air handling units that serve both office and laboratory zones allowing outside air to ventilate the laboratories, and laminar flow diffusers in autopsy spaces to increase effectiveness and reduce airflow. The building is targeting LEED Silver certification.

The Travis County Medical Examiner’s new office is located at 7723 Springdale Road, Austin, in east Travis County. The old office at 1213 Sabine Street in downtown Austin is being renovated into the Austin-Travis County Sobriety Center.

SmithGroupJJR provided planning, architecture, MEP engineering, and construction administration, working in association with Austin-based Barnes Gromatzky Kosarek Architects. Harvey-Cleary Builders served as general contractor.

**SmithGroupJJR** ([www.smithgroupjjr.com](http://www.smithgroupjjr.com/)) is one of the world’s preeminent, integrated design firms. Working across a network of 12 offices in the U.S. and China, its team of 1,300 experts is committed to excellence in strategy, design and delivery. The scale of the firm’s thinking and organization produces partnerships with forward-looking clients that maximize opportunities, minimize risk and solve their most complex problems. SmithGroupJJR creates exceptional design solutions for healthcare, science and technology organizations, higher education and cultural institutions, urban environments, diverse workplaces, mixed-use and waterfront developments, and parks and open spaces.

The **Travis County Medical Examiner’s Office** ([www.traviscountytx.gov/medical\_examiner](http://www.traviscountytx.gov/medical_examiner)) provides medicolegal death investigation for Travis County, Texas and 43 surrounding central Texas counties.