



# HIDALGO COUNTY **Courthouse** MASTER PLAN

*A Scope Development for Judicial and  
Government Facilities in Edinburg, Texas*

November 2012

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**EDINBURG**

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# Executive Summary



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## OVERVIEW

This master plan study was commissioned to determine the space needs, both current and future, for Hidalgo County. It will be used to make recommendations on the most efficient and cost effective ways to expand and accommodate the various county departments for the next 23 years.

The recommendations give significant weight to mitigating security and safety concerns that occur in the current facilities for the staff and public using them. In order to accomplish this task, ERO Architects was hired along with Godinez Communications and Gallegos Project Management to implement and guide the master plan process to ultimately deliver a comprehensive document with recommendations for future growth. This document would ultimately be approved by Hidalgo County Commissioners and the Hidalgo County Judge.

A master plan committee was formed, made up of representatives from the county judge's office,

county commissioners appointees, community-at-large appointees, budget and finance office, facilities department, district attorney's office, purchasing department, county and district clerks, sheriff's office, public defender's office, indigent defense office, Hidalgo County Bar Association and the City of Edinburg. These committee members served as stakeholders and provided opinions and comments throughout the process. Public meetings were also held in each of the four precinct offices to engage the citizens of Hidalgo County in the process, as well as to obtain public comment and support for the master plan.

## MASTER PLAN APPROACH

There were three phases to this master plan: Discovery and Analysis; Vision and Concepts; and Refinement and Completion. The master plan was completed using an accelerated schedule with completion within seven months.

The team considered the following factors, evaluating both the existing

building and functions plus the proposed new buildings and functions:

1. Master planning approach
  - » Site analysis
  - » Assessment of buildings
  - » Facility programming of county departments
  - » Design criteria—Historical and Architectural
2. Mechanical systems conditions
3. Project schedule for implementation
4. Conceptual cost estimating

## SPATIAL DEFICIENCIES

The Master Plan Team conducted face-to-face interviews with each of the county stakeholders to determine the spatial requirements of each department. This master plan presents spatial requirements for existing needs and for projected 23-year needs. Additionally, the planning team toured the existing facilities with each of the stakeholders to determine how well the existing facilities accommodated their current needs both spatially and functionally. A space summary was

generated for each of the existing county departments to document their current and future space needs. These future needs were determined by projected staff counts and space needs benchmarked to already established best practices for a building of this type and size.

After conducting the interviews and the facility assessments, it was determined that there are significant spatial, functional and maintenance related deficiencies within each of the facilities studied in this report. Of particular concern was the courts function which had the most need for space and security. It was determined that the existing facilities were not adequately supplying the stakeholders with the appropriate amount of space or configuration that allowed for proper work flow and security. Additionally, it was determined that the ability of these existing facilities to be upgraded and expanded to accommodate future need was minimal.

### SPACE NEEDS

The Hidalgo County population has grown over 476% since 1954, when the original Hidalgo County Courthouse was built. Hidalgo County currently has a population of approximately 800,000 citizens and the population of the county was only 168,000 in 1954. At that time, the county departmental square footage was originally 56,000 square feet and has only grown to 193,000 square feet, encompassing both the current courthouse and administration building. The space summary that was developed for this master plan forecasts spatial needs expanded to 418,000 GSF to accommodate existing functions for proper work and efficiency. Those projected needs will be expanded further, to 500,000 GSF 23 years from now. (Offsite storage is not included in these numbers).

SUMMARY OF EXISTING SQUARE FEET	
Existing Courthouse Building	93,000
Annex Building	8,000
Administration Building	92,000
<b>Total Square Feet</b>	<b>193,000</b>

SUMMARY OF CURRENT AND PROJECTED SQUARE FOOT NEEDS		
	Current Need	23-Year Projected (15%)
District & County Clerks	69,000	91,000
DA (Admin Bldg)	55,000	73,000
Courts Building	294,000	336,000
	<b>418,000 GSF</b>	<b>500,000 GSF</b>

The Preferred Vision for meeting Hidalgo County’s current and future space needs includes:

Building one new 294,000 square foot New Courts Building to house the county and district courts. The projected needs will be fulfilled by building enough shell space, which can be easily finished out as needed and as caseloads increase. The following spaces would be housed in the new courts building:

- County and District Courts
- Judge’s chambers and auxiliary administration spaces
- Secure judge’s parking
- Lobby shared spaces, such as security cueing and processing
- Cafeteria
- Auditorium
- Support spaces, such as restrooms and facilities maintenance

This preferred vision also includes the restoration and remediation of the existing 93,000 square foot historic Hidalgo County Courthouse. This historic building would then house the Clerks Building, which would be home to the following departments and functions:

- County Clerk
- District Clerk
- Facilities
- IT

The office of the District Attorney would remain in its recently remodeled current location in the Administration Building across from the new courthouse site.

Also of utmost importance is the location of the New

Courts Building. The recommendation is that the New Courts Building should remain in the historic Edinburg town square and be placed directly across the street from the DA's office (Administration Building) and directly east of the Clerks Building (existing historic Hidalgo County Courthouse). This would allow equal access from both the clerks and the district attorney. If possible, it is recommended that the New Courts Building be connected to the DA's office via a skybridge.

### COSTS AND IMPLEMENTATION

The Master Plan Team explored several options with Hidalgo County for financing of the new courthouse and the restoration of the existing courthouse. Multiple financing meetings were held with the county's Budget Office and county officials to discuss the various options, which included the possible use of General Obligation Bonds, Certificates of Obligation bonds and Public Private Partnerships (P3). The conceptual cost for meeting the current and future needs of Hidalgo County based on the above noted recommendations are as follows:

NEW COURTS BUILDING	
Construction Budget	\$71,988,000
<b>Total Project Cost</b>	<b>\$88,477,000</b>
<b>TOTAL BUDGET FOR RECOMMENDATIONS: APPROXIMATELY \$112,973,000</b>	

RENOVATION AND REMEDIATION OF EXISTING COURTHOUSE	
Construction Budget	\$13,072,500
<b>Total Project Cost</b>	<b>\$15,776,000</b>
<b>ESTIMATE TO TEMPORARILY MOVE ALL DEPARTMENTS DURING TWO-YEAR CONSTRUCTION: \$5,300,000</b>	

The master plan provides Hidalgo County with a guide to begin the process of procuring architectural services and begin the design of the new courthouse facility and restoration of the existing courthouse.

### Construction Method

Our recommendation for project delivery is Construction Manager at-risk (CMAR) due to the size of the project. Construction management at-risk is seen by many policy-makers and legislators as an innovative approach to public sector project delivery. Advantages to CMAR over traditional methods of procurement are:

- Increases the speed of the project and can also strengthen coordination between the architect/engineer and the construction manager.
- The client hires the construction manager based on qualifications, thus better ensuring a construction manager with a strong allegiance to the client, because their business relies on references and repeat work.
- Construction managers, architects/engineers, and the client all collaborate. This creates enhanced synergies throughout the process.
- Transparency is enhanced, because all costs and fees are in the open, which diminishes adversarial relationships between components working on the project, while at the same time eliminating bid shopping.

A contractor with extensive courthouse construction experience should be considered. It is also recommended that a contractor with restoration and remediation of historic building experience be hired to renovate the existing courthouse. The phasing of construction will also be important because the New Courts Building will have to be built prior to the renovation of the existing courthouse.

