



PRESS RELEASE

Michelle Lujan Grisham, *Governor*
Tim Q. Johnson, *Interim Cabinet Secretary*

Contact: H. L. LOVATO
505 / 827 9207
dps.pio@state.nm.us
www.dps.nm.org

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, February 23, 2021

Groundbreaking kicks off construction of new state forensic laboratory

SANTA FE - The State of New Mexico broke ground Monday on a new \$21.9 million state-of-the-art forensic laboratory. The 44,000 square foot lab will be located on a 3.9 acre lot owned by the State of New Mexico on Galisteo Street in northeast Santa Fe.

The Department of Public Safety facility will support all New Mexico law enforcement, criminal justice and court systems by analyzing forensic evidence collected at crime scenes and presenting their scientific findings in court.

“This facility will help support investigations and analysis – and in the process help deliver justice to victims of crime all across New Mexico,” said Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham. “My hope is that this resource will ultimately help our state become even more proactive in preventing violent crime and providing for the public safety of New Mexico families.”

“This state-of-the-art forensic laboratory modernizes a critical element of the criminal justice system,” said Interim DPS Cabinet Secretary Tim Q. Johnson. “Providing our scientists adequate space to examine and analyze crime scene evidence that assist investigations and prosecutions develop impartial findings is critical. Our responsibility is to safeguard that justice is being served in New Mexico communities, law enforcement and courts.”

“This project has long been in the planning stages, and it is finally getting underway thanks to the leadership of Governor Lujan Grisham,” General Services Secretary Ken Ortiz said. “We look forward to continued collaboration with DPS during construction of this important asset for law enforcement across New Mexico.”

In Fiscal Year 2020, the DPS Forensic Laboratory received more than 17,930 items for analysis associated with 8,609 cases, said Johnson. The DPS Forensic Lab provides confirmatory results for more than 300 New Mexico Law Enforcement agencies at no direct cost. The scientists are subpoenaed to provide expert witness testimony on their laboratory results in all New Mexico State and Federal Courts.

“The current lab is 50 years old and there is a critical need for growth and expansion,” said Johnson. “This facility is designed around the security needs of staff and law enforcement personnel and will meet the demands of the ever-growing field of forensic science.”

Katharina Babcock, DPS Forensic Laboratory Director said, “Growing from about 10,000 to a 44,000 square foot laboratory is an important milestone for New Mexico justice.

“We deliver unbiased scientific results the criminal justice system expects and demands,” said Babcock. “The new lab augments state-of-the-art forensic processes, provides flexibility to support future technologies and growth, and will maximize recruitment and retention of existing forensic scientists and staff.”

The DPS Forensic Lab is internationally accredited by the American Association for Laboratory Accreditation (A2LA) for forensic science laboratory disciplines in molecular biology (DNA), forensic chemistry, latent fingerprint examination, and firearms and toolmarks examination, said Babcock. In addition to the Santa Fe laboratory, the department maintains forensic laboratories in Hobbs and Las Cruces.

Staff and law enforcement will have separate access to the facility to protect the chain of custody. Staff will have a dedicated, secure, parking area and the building design incorporates features to create a secure working environment.

All the current lab functions will be substantially enhanced with new equipment that meets current lab standards. The facility will also include space for future growth and lab functions that were previously not available.

The Facilities Management Division of the General Services Department will manage construction of the forensic lab. Bradbury Stamm Construction, Inc., New Mexico's largest women owned business and the oldest construction firm in the state, was awarded the contract for construction.

Dekker/Perich/Sabatini (D/P/S), a multi-disciplinary firm is providing architecture, landscape architecture, planning, interior design, and structural engineering services for the project. For specialized expertise in forensic labs, D/P/S collaborated with Crime Lab Design, which provides comprehensive lab planning services for forensic science and criminal justice facilities. Working as a team, they were able to use their respective talents to deliver an integrated design approach.

Civil engineering services were provided by Bohannon Huston, Inc., and mechanical, electrical and plumbing (MEP) engineering was provided by Bridgers & Paxton.

The planning and design of this facility reflect the State's goals and commitment to providing the highest quality service to the citizens of New Mexico. The 19-month project is estimated to be complete by the fall of 2022.

###



Architectural rendering of
DPS Forensic Laboratory