



Ellis County Courts and Administration Building
City of Waxahachie Parking Garage
Ellis County Jail Expansion

Waxahachie, Texas



Overview

Waxahachie is a picturesque and historic community nestled in the rolling hills of North Central Texas. In a state renowned for its beautiful historic courthouses, Waxahachie is noted for possessing one of the true jewels of this genre: The historic Ellis County Courthouse. Although a focal point for the town and region, Ellis County had long since outgrown this magnificent edifice. To meet the growing needs of the community, county and court operations were placed in temporary facilities throughout Waxahachie. With a goal of bringing

these scattered operations together in a state-of-the-art facility, a new Courts and Administration building opened its doors in the spring of 2010. Furthering the county's justice efforts are an expanded jail facility and a new parking garage for county and community functions. The new buildings complement Waxahachie's historic downtown and provide the space, technology, and security to serve Ellis County as its population continues to grow.



Project Team

The citizens of Ellis County approved a Bond referendum in 2006 that included a new Courts and Administration Building and an expansion to the Ellis County Detention Center. At that time, the City of Waxahachie offered to build an adjacent Parking Garage in order to secure the location of the facility in Waxahachie. Once passed by the voters, the County went through a selection process to hire a firm to design all three projects. HDR Architecture, Inc., A leading courthouse and justice facility design firm, was selected to lead the design efforts.

Program Manager: The Staubach Company
Architect/Engineer: HDR Architecture, Inc.
Information/Technology Consultant: Stravis Technologies
General Contractor: Balfour Beatty, Inc.
Parking Consultant: Walker Parking Consultants
Civil Engineering: Freese & Nichols

Ellis County and the City of Waxahachie collaborated on the funding and administration of the project as partners. Together they coordinated the functional requirements with the goals of the Heritage Preservation Commission for new downtown development.



Courts and Administration Building

The new Courts and Administration building was tasked with bringing all county and court operations into one building. The new building complements the grandeur of the historic courthouse and provides the County with ample space to serve current and future residents.

The project team worked closely with the City of Waxahachie Heritage Preservation Commission and solicited community input in the design of the new building. Architects spent time in the Waxahachie downtown area studying the language of the existing buildings to create an innovative design that was unanimously approved by the Commission and community. The exterior color palette takes its inspiration from the rich earth tones of the historic Ellis County Courthouse and the terra cotta brick found in the surrounding buildings in the town square. The windows and brick piers further reflect the patterns found in the town and are complemented by large stone arches defining the courtrooms and the main court entry.

The interiors of the building reflect a modest yet grand design. The main doorway is made of two 10-foot-tall custom wood doors that lead visitors into a two-story lobby featuring decorative terrazzo flooring, a decorative window, and a custom-designed balcony. The courtrooms feature custom millwork details above each door that include specialty lighting and backlit letters to enhance the aesthetic of the interiors.

Prior to the construction of each of the four courtrooms, the project team constructed mockups in a local warehouse. The mockup allowed the project team and the county to experience the courtroom design prior to construction. The finalized design includes custom-designed attorney tables and judge bench areas, a high-tech audio video system, and Bauhaus furniture. Although all of the courtrooms are based on the same design, each is tailored for a specific judge.

BUILDING DETAILS

- Building Area: 102,000 Square Feet
- Number of Floors: 4
- Surface Parking: 71 vehicles
- Occupants:
 - 2 County Courts of Law
 - 2 District Courts
 - 2 Future Court Rooms
 - County Clerk
 - District Clerk
 - District Attorney
 - Law Library & Attorney Work Room
 - Development
 - Fire Marshal
 - I/T
 - County Engineer
 - Tax Office
 - Fourth floor to accommodate an additional 20,000 square foot expansion

Parking Garage

The new parking garage design features detailed stonework to visually connect with the surrounding historic buildings. The 132,000-square-foot structure can hold 317 vehicles and serves both county and community functions.





Jail Expansion

The new jail expansion is a series of six dayroom pods that are open with direct supervision. Direct supervision places the correctional officer's station inside the pod, giving officers the ability to constantly monitor inmate interaction. This style of supervision has been proven to be a safer method to manage inmates, and also reduces costs as officers can respond to problems before they get out of hand.

The expansion includes 288 inmate beds, bringing the total bed count to 800. The materials used throughout the jail match those used in the original jail, offering a seamless transition from the old to the new. It includes an extra large kitchen, laundry facility, and the capability to expand to the east and up two floors. Also included in the project was the installation of a refurbished jail cell in the existing jail lobby. The cell was salvaged from the old Ellis County Jail that was torn down to make room for the new parking garage.

To strengthen security and lower costs, remote video visitation and arraignment has been setup to eliminate unnecessary inmate travel. The systems eliminate the need for a guard to transport a prisoner to a

community visitation room or the courtroom. For those inmates that must be physically present in hearings, an underground tunnel transports them from the jail to the courthouse, preventing any interaction with the public. Security cameras are located throughout the jail, the underground tunnel, and in the courthouse.

Also included in the project was a future jail Master Plan. At full build out, the jail will include 2,300 inmate beds.

BUILDING DETAILS

- New Building Area: 85,906 square feet
- Renovated Area: 7,620 square feet
- Number of Floors: 2 (expandable to 4)
- New beds: 288
- New areas:
 - 911 Center
 - Dayroom
 - Multipurpose Room
 - Outdoor Recreation Yards
 - Kitchen/Laundry
 - Remote Visitation and Video Arraignment Rooms

