

## **Space Planning Principles & Guidelines**

The Commissioners Court is responsible for the development, allocation and maintenance of the physical environment in which services will be provided to the constituents of Travis County. For this reason, this Master Plan recommends the following space planning principles and guidelines for adoption by the Commissioners Court. These will help guide the Commissioners Court and their staff as they plan, allocate and construct all county facilities and parking. It should be noted that the Commissioners Court has sole authority over the allocation/reallocation of space and parking for all existing and new facilities. This authority may be delegated for administrative reasons only by specific direction of the Commissioners Court.

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### **PRINCIPLES OF MASTER PLANNING**

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The overarching concern guiding the location and function of Travis County services is the perspective of the client accessing the services and the taxpayer who pays for such services. This principle is the hallmark consideration for all the recommendations contained in this Master Plan. The following space planning principles should guide the development of any projects undertaken to implement the strategic directions articulated later in this document.

#### **A. Collaboration**

Travis County will foster collaboration with other local government and public agencies in the joint use and development of facilities and take advantage of such opportunities as they arise.

#### **B. Maximize Existing Owned Real Estate**

Travis County will maximize the use of its existing owned real estate assets prior to the acquisition of additional real estate and development in the same geographic area. Consideration will be given to either:

1. the abandonment of owned sites that are too small in size to meet the needs for development in the area; or
2. the demolition of existing structures and redevelopment of larger facilities where existing assets are under utilized.

#### **C. Parking**

Travis County will provide parking with every new development sufficient to meet the demand of both employees and clients accessing the site. Consideration will be given to public transportation access for any new site acquisitions. Employees and clients will be encouraged to use alternative means of transportation when accessing county services

#### **D. Expansion Space**

Travis County will include expansion space in each new development to allow for the future growth of departments. It is reasonable for space allocated to a department to be more than the immediate need projected at occupancy if there is a reasonable expectation that the department will add employees over time.

#### **E. Facility Siting and Land Use**

Travis County will attempt to site new facilities to be compatible with the surrounding neighborhoods. Land acquisition and facility siting should accommodate sufficient land to accommodate future facility expansion and to provide an appropriate buffer between the county facility and the neighborhood. The exact requirements for such a buffer will be determined based on the type of project under consideration and the existing zoning of adjacent properties.

#### **F. Operational Planning**

The operational planning and programmatic directions established by a department and approved by the Commissioner Court will guide the location and allocation of space to a department. Such operational planning will consider the impact of existing and future technological advancements including the use of the Internet for the access to and provision of county services.

#### **G. Owning Vs Leasing**

Travis County will endeavor to own at least 75% of the space it occupies during any given year. This principle reflects the standard adopted by the Texas State General Services Commission for the ratio of owned to leased State properties located in Travis County. A decision to lease more than 25% of the space occupied in a given year should be in response to an immediate or temporary space need and when one or more of the following circumstances apply:

- It is less expensive to lease than to provide county-owned space;
- Temporary space is needed for all or part of a department until such time that a reasonable County owned space can be secured;
- When a granting agency will pay for the cost of the lease and the space is to accommodate grant staff;
- When the long term continuation of the program to be accommodated is not clear; or
- It is necessary to vacate a county owned site to allow for renovation.

#### **H. Quality Standards**

Travis County will develop and maintain quality standards for the working environment of its employees and clients. These standards will be attached as an Appendix to this document, or later versions of this document, as they are developed and approved by the Commissioners Court. Such standards will address the quality of construction as well as the quality level for on-going maintenance and custodial services, environmental quality, building security, landscaping and aesthetics. Any quality standards developed should keep in mind the protection of the general health and welfare of county employees. The standards developed should ensure that the materials and design of a new facility will project an aesthetically pleasing image appropriate for the housing of a public entity.

#### **I.. Space Allocation Standards**

Travis County will consistently adhere to space allocation standards that address the size, configuration, and type of space to be provided. Additionally, such standards will address:

- the method of application of the standard;
- departmental and building grossing factors to be used;
- location and configuration of auxiliary spaces such as conference rooms, break rooms, storage areas, copy rooms, etc.; and
- location of building circulation and public amenities and security features.

## **J. Child Care**

The Travis County Commissioners Court is aware that there is currently a shortage of child care resources in the Austin area and will therefore consider the location/availability of child care services in the areas in which they are attempting to locate new facilities. Further, the Commissioners Court will consider proposals for partnership arrangements with child care providers located in close proximity to Travis County facilities.

## **K. Public Scrutiny**

The Travis County Commissioners Court welcomes public scrutiny of its deliberations and decisions. Therefore, public hearings regarding facility plans beyond those mandated by law or local ordinance are encouraged. Additionally, the Commissioners Court encourages the participation in public hearings of all stakeholders or members of the public who may be impacted by potential new development or a change in use of an existing facility that may be under contemplation.

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## **GUIDELINES FOR EXECUTING THE MASTER PLAN**

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The following space planning guidelines have been developed to assist in the implementation of the principles outlined above. These guidelines are the cornerstone of the specific standards for the allocation of space and placement of a department within a particular building or geographic area of the county. Therefore, these guidelines should be used in the development of architectural programs for future Travis County building programs.

### **A. Geographic Location and Relationships:**

- The highest and best use for each existing facility is determined based first on geographic location matched to the needs of departments and the clients they serve. For example, the downtown campus facilities will be used to serve court and court-related services based on the location of the historic Courthouse. Since Travis County constituents already come to the Courthouse, to fragment court services to areas away from the Courthouse would be burdensome to the client accessing the courts, as well as operationally more expensive to the taxpayers of Travis County.

- Offices with similar missions and functions will be located in close proximity to one another, either in the same building or in the same campus.
- Offices that have clients that must move from one office to another at a similar point in time to conduct a single transaction will be located in the same building or in the building with the closest adjacency within the campus.
- Offices that have multiple administrative interactions with one another on a daily basis that cannot be achieved through electronic transactions will be located in the same building.
- Offices with similar security requirements should be located in close proximity to one another, either in the same building or within the same campus.
- Travis County will locate offices in individual precincts when the focus of service is limited to the clientele living in such a precinct or the services provided are precinct specific, such as road maintenance.
- Satellite or precinct-based facilities will be sited based on the geographic demand for services. The demand will be evaluated by zip code and the facility sited in the zip code registering the highest client utilization of services.
- Offices and/or campus configurations serving large volumes of public walk-in or drive through traffic will be located on major thoroughfares with convenient public parking and access to alternative transportation services.
- The appropriate type and quantity of parking should be evaluated with all new construction projects. Such evaluation should include consideration of parking garages as well as lots. The feasibility of development/redevelopment of existing parking lots and/or renovation of existing parking structures should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
- County facilities will be located on or near the Greater Austin Area Telecommunications Network (GAATN) lines or other county owned fiber optic, metropolitan area network (MAN) cabling routes. Facility services will be provided through these

cabling routes as Information Telecommunications Systems and the Commissioners Court determine that the conversion from commercial to private service is justified.

**B. Massing or Location within a Building:**

- Offices with the most walk-in public traffic on a daily basis will be located on the lowest floors of a building.
- Divisions of a single department will be co-located on a single floor. If a building footprint and department size cannot accommodate location of the entire office on a single floor, then the department will be split along division lines. The divisions with the most walk-in traffic on a daily basis will be located lowest in the building and the other divisions will be located on the next floor.
- Accessory use spaces shared between departments will be located away from the building perimeter in interior space. Such spaces will include a floor conference room, break room and copy room.

**C. Allocation of Space:**

- All general office environments will accommodate at least 5 years of projected departmental growth, within the departmental allocation, from the date of occupancy of the improved space.
- The need for shelled building space (for expansion beyond the 5-year planning horizon provided for within a departmental allocation) will be determined for each individual building project and/or renovation. Such shell space should be provided in a fashion that will minimize disruption to the day-to-day business of a department as the space is built-out in the future.
- Space will be allocated by Full Time Equivalent (FTE) based on the standards currently adopted by the Commissioners Court and attached as Appendix B to this document. These standards will be consistently adhered to across all County improvements.
- Existing allocations of space to departments will be improved to meet current standards when a request for additional resources is evaluated and it is determined that additional FTE cannot be accommodated within the available departmental space.

- Space standards will maintain an overall departmental average of 153 square feet per FTE. This standard is currently used by the State of Texas General Services Commission and has been verified as a reasonable standard for planning purposes. This calculation will include space allocated to the individual staff members in a department, but will not include auxiliary use spaces within the department as defined by the bullet below
- A factor between 25% to 35% will be added to the 153 square feet per staff member (see above) to allow area for "auxiliary use spaces" to support the department. These types of common spaces include departmental lobbies or waiting rooms, file rooms, copy areas, mailrooms and conference rooms, etc.
- In addition to "auxiliary use spaces" to support the department, there is a need to incorporate departmental circulation space when planning an office suite. An internal departmental circulation factor of 10 to 15% will be added when planning all general office environments to allow space for internal hallways and aisles. These numbers may be reduced or exceeded with prior approval from the Commissioners Court and are subject to evaluation on a case-by-case basis.
- Overall building square footage figures will allow for common use areas outside of that assigned to specific departments. This area is commonly referred to as the "building grossing factor" or "building core factor" and will account for the following areas:
  - Building circulation areas including elevators, stairwells, building lobbies, and corridors,
  - Public restrooms, public break rooms/vending areas and telephone vestibules,
  - Employee shower and change facilities and,
  - Mechanical, plumbing and telecommunications rooms and chases.
- A building core factor or grossing factor, between 25 to 30% will be used to plan all new construction. Circulation systems will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and may be sized to

accommodate peak demand for special use buildings, such as court and classroom facilities, etc.

- All allocations of space and configurations within a building will comply with the Uniform Building Code, Texas Accessibility Standards, County Space Standards, Uniform Plumbing Code, National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) Code and any other codes or ordinances enforced by the local jurisdiction.
- Special use facilities such as courts should accommodate up to 15 years of growth from the date of occupancy of the improved space. This may include a plan for the periodic expansion of a facility to incorporate additional office space and/or to accommodate internal reconfiguration to retrofit for additional special use rooms such as courts.
- Modular/Systems furniture will be utilized whenever an open or semi-private office configuration will make a reasonable accommodation for an individual. Although this will represent a higher initial capital cost, the advantages gained in flexibility of the space, efficiency of the space allocation and time frame to execute a project will minimize the cost and impact of future expansion projects on a department-by-department basis.

#### **D. Quality of Space:**

- Quality standards will be developed and maintained by Facilities Management for all new construction and renovation projects that address the technical or material quality of the space as well as the desired maintenance level to be provided.
- The quality standards developed will incorporate the technical specifications for technology infrastructure developed and maintained by Information and Telecommunications Services. Such standards will define a telecommunications infrastructure that will meet current and projected operational needs for technology.
- Technical standards for building construction will address acceptable exterior construction materials based on life cycle costs for maintenance and meet a minimum average 50-year life.

- The technical standards developed for interior construction will be applied to any space leased by Travis County.
- The quality or level of security appropriate for each category of county building owned and leased will be identified by the TCSO and attached to the quality standards developed by Facilities Management.
- The quality standards will identify interior and exterior landscaping guidelines to include not only vegetation but also all interior and exterior signage and lighting.

**E. Transportation and Parking:**

- All new construction projects will include sufficient parking to meet not only the employee demand but also the constituent demand identified at a particular facility or campus. As park and ride facilities are developed with Capital Metro, parking demand numbers will be calculated using a factor for anticipated ridership to further encourage the use of alternative transportation.
- All facilities and/or future campus developments within the Capital Metro service area will be in reasonable proximity to Capital Metro service routes or other alternative transportation services that may be in the area. To this end, Travis County will collaborate with Capital Metro to investigate placing some level of park and ride facilities at all county sites.
- The quality standards developed should address an anticipated alternative transportation utilization factor to be applied to the parking demand identified by facility in order to encourage the use of alternative transportation.
- Multi-level parking facilities may be considered to accommodate parking demand at all county sites.
- Appropriate levels of lighting and security should be outlined in the quality standards. Such standards should provide for a safe and secure environment for employees during all hours of operation, but should not be intrusive to the surrounding neighborhoods.

- Pedestrian and bicycle access will be an integral part of the site development concept for each new site developed by Travis County.
- Bicycle racks should be provided at each County facility. Shower and change facilities should be provided in each new facility to further encourage employee use of alternative modes of transportation. Existing facilities should be retrofit to accommodate these amenities when it is feasible and reasonable to do so.