



City Council Approves Plan to Move HFSC Out of HPD Headquarters in 2019

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Houston City Council approved Wednesday a lease that allows the Houston Forensic Science Center to move its crime laboratory into a specially built facility outside of police headquarters by the end of next year.

The plan is cost-neutral and includes the construction of a crime laboratory specifically built with forensics in mind.

The lease, which fits within HFSC's current annual \$2.6 million facility costs, moves all the 200-plus staff to four floors at 500 Jefferson. Three floors will be office space and one floor will be a newly built laboratory space. The lease also includes about 3,000 square feet in the basement for a firing range and crime scene evidence processing.

"We thank City Council for supporting our unique plan that allows Houston to get a superior crime laboratory within tight budget realities," said Dr. Peter Stout, HFSC's CEO and president.

"We are excited by the prospect of finally providing Houstonians with a crime laboratory that has proper ventilation and power needs allowing us to do the kind of work that best preserves public safety," he added.

HFSC has spent more than two years reviewing more than 60 different facility options, including a build-to-suit laboratory that would have cost about \$150 million according to a needs assessment.

“In the end, considering the fiscal realities, we understood that we needed a creative solution that would keep costs neutral,” said Nicole Casarez, the chairwoman of HFSC’s board of directors.

“This solution, which amortizes the cost of construction into the life of the 30-year contract, affords HFSC the best of both worlds: a new, specially designed laboratory and budget stability,” she said.

Under the plan, HFSC will begin moving staff out of a leased Fannin location in March 2019. A phased move out of HPD headquarters in 1200 Travis will be completed by the end of December 2019.

HFSC is a local government corporation that provides forensic services to the City of Houston and other local agencies. HFSC is overseen by a Board of Directors appointed by the Mayor of Houston and confirmed by the Houston City Council. Its management structure is designed to be responsive to a 2009 recommendation by the National Academy of Sciences that called for crime laboratories to be independent of law enforcement and prosecutorial branches of government.

HFSC operates in seven forensic disciplines.

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