



## Project Snapshot

Austin Police Department  
78,000 sf Facility  
Police Substation  
Forensics Science Center

## Case Study

### Austin Police Substation and Forensics Science Center

*When voters in Austin, Texas approved bonds to construct a new Substation and Forensics Center, TAG International was selected to provide the architectural design and oversee the implementation of the project. Working closely with City of Austin and APD staff, TAG led the process of creating a highly specialized, state-of-the-art law enforcement and forensics facility that would enhance the department's ability to solve crimes, as well as provide an inviting environment for visitors and nearly 300 APD employees.*

Creating a space to accommodate APD's unique forensic and law enforcement needs required significant insight and an in-depth understanding by TAG.

**Through creativity and innovation, effective design blends imagination, functionality and common sense.**

The project involved many diverse design considerations, including a variety of functional and environmental concerns. A primary design issue was ensuring that the new facility was well-suited to the surrounding neighborhood, taking into consideration concerns about appearance, lighting and noise.

*The Forensics Center houses crime scene investigations, DNA crime lab, drug chemistry lab, ballistics testing, multimedia center, evidence storage, and a separate vehicle examination area.*

*The Substation houses two area commands, including patrol officers, detectives, narcotics squad, traffic enforcement, briefing rooms, fitness gym and lockers, and victim's services.*

*The combined facility also includes a community meeting room with audio/visual systems designed to function as a satellite Emergency Operations Center in the event of a crisis.*



In creating the exterior design, it was important that the building's appearance and materials resonate with the warmth and natural setting of Austin. Outside, the parking lot lighting and equipment noise needed to be contained to avoid being obtrusive to the neighborhood.

Functionally, the design of the facility required the integration of a variety of disparate departments — with widely varied programmatic and technical requirements — into a cohesive whole. There were also critical considerations regarding important issues such as safety, security, workflow and evidence control and management.

# Austin Police Substation and Forensics Science Center

## Services provided:

Site Evaluation and Planning  
Feasibility/Due Diligence  
Architecture and Design

TAG faced a variety of challenges in creating a design that would accommodate the diverse needs of a highly sensitive DNA crime lab and crime scene investigation area, a drug chemistry lab, and a ballistics testing range — combined with the unique requirements of a police substation. Previously, most of the Forensics divisions were spread out across two buildings at the main headquarters location, while the crime scene section was located across town in an old vacated airport building.

For APD staff, disseminating information and achieving unity between the sections was challenging, since the dispersed locations made personal contact difficult. The new facility provides much easier “cross functional” access for personnel, which eliminated communication barriers and created a new level of synergy and efficiency.

In creating the APD facility, TAG was successful in overcoming many complexities to achieve diverse project goals. While the new facility conveys a highly professional image and meets the precise functionality needs of APD’s staff and daily visitors, it also strikes an effective balance between accessibility and security. TAG used passive security strategies that are not readily visible to achieve a high level of threat-resistance, while creating a welcoming, community-oriented appearance for the public.

The facility’s exterior and interior windows are designed to create a visual perception of transparency, giving APD

employees access to natural light and outside views from their work stations. The design uses a variety of spaces, colors, warm materials, and visual interest to create a welcoming atmosphere.

Ultimately, the APD building functions as it was intended to —

both on a functional and a human level. It allows people who do very important jobs to work in an environment that is not just state-of-the-art, but also an inviting, inspiring place to work.



*“The new building provided the divisions a great place to work, it increased morale, and became a showplace for others building forensic laboratories.”*

— William Gibbens, Manager of Forensic Science Services, APD



3160 Bee Cave Road, Suite 200  
Austin, TX 78746  
Phone: 512.328.1010  
www.tagae.com

**tag** INTERNATIONAL  
BUILDING POTENTIAL™