

News Release

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Construction Begins on Arkansas Public Health Laboratory

Building's Contemporary Architectural Design Responds to Requirements for State-of-the-art Workspaces, Integration With Existing Buildings, Increased Staff Interaction and Decreased Operational Costs

LITTLE ROCK, Ark., Sept. 7, 2004 – Construction began here last month on a new \$23 million public health laboratory for the state of Arkansas. When completed in December 2005, the three-story, 82,000-square-foot building will include nearly 50,000 square feet of laboratory space for the high-quality testing and control of bioterroristic agents as well as infectious and genetic diseases.

The facility's architectural team includes designers at Atlanta-based Lord, Aeck & Sargent, and Little Rock-based architect of record, The Wilcox Group.

“We provided our architects with a number of challenges, one of which was to design state-of-the-art laboratory workspaces that are safe, secure, efficient in terms of allowing quicker processing times, and adaptable to ever-changing threats to our public health,” said Dr. Mike Loeffelholz, Arkansas Public Health Laboratory director. “We also challenged them to design a beautiful, modern structure that would integrate easily with the existing '60s-style architecture of the other buildings on the Arkansas Department of Health campus.

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“Lord, Aeck & Sargent’s design team listened to our requirements and responded with a contemporary facility that will be exciting and innovative as well as competitive with the most sophisticated state public health labs in the country,” Loeffelholz continued. “It will allow us to ensure that our food and drinking water are safe, that highly infectious diseases are promptly recognized and controlled, and that all newborn babies are tested for serious genetic defects.”

In addition to about 4,500 square feet of BSL-3 and 45,500 square feet BSL-2 containment laboratories, the building will include offices, conference rooms, a library, information technology facilities, and spaces for training, data entry and specimen receiving and login. To ensure the safety of building occupants, there are two distinct circulation paths, one for the movement of samples and utilities, the other for movement of people.

“The Arkansas Department of Health goals were for a building design that would encourage staff interaction, allow workers to connect visually with the community they serve and allow the community, in return, to see them and imagine the significant work they do to protect Arkansas citizens,” said Todd Bertsch, a Lord, Aeck & Sargent designer and project manager.

“To respond to this goal, we created a facility with light-filled laboratories and wonderful gathering spaces, including a transparent, three-story atrium anchored by a crafted monumental staircase. We think that all of the public and work spaces will inspire as well as support the day-to-day activities of the building’s occupants,” Bertsch stated.

The facility also incorporates a number of sustainable design features aimed at decreasing operational costs. To ensure that it will be energy efficient despite the extensive use of large windows, it will incorporate sophisticated exterior shading devices that prevent direct sunlight from entering the building. In addition, a cutting-edge energy recovery mechanical system will save a significant amount in future energy costs. Water conservation strategies include development of a wetland area for site and roof water runoff.

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The Project Team

In addition to Lord, Aeck & Sargent and The Wilcox Group, the Arkansas Public Health Laboratory project team includes:

- Nabholz Construction Corporation (Little Rock, Ark. office), general contractor
- TME Consulting Engineers (Little Rock, Ark.), MEPFP engineers;
- McClelland Consulting Engineers (Little Rock, Ark.), civil engineers;
- I.C.E. Consulting Engineers (Little Rock, Ark.), structural engineers; and
- Larson Burns & Smith (Little Rock, Ark. office), landscape architect.

About Lord, Aeck & Sargent

Founded in 1942, Lord, Aeck & Sargent is an award-winning architectural firm serving clients in scientific, academic, historic preservation, arts and cultural markets. The firm's core values are responsive design, technological expertise and exceptional service. Lord, Aeck & Sargent is headquartered in Atlanta and has offices in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Chapel Hill, North Carolina. For more information, visit the firm at www.lordaecksargent.com.

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