



Renderings of the building front and lobby interior courtesy Spears Horn Architects. The firm is also involved in the rehabilitation of the historic Lamy Building — the photos on the opposite page show work progressing on the west-facade windows, and a balcony balustrade (below the *espadaña*) in need of work

Two state projects occupy Spears Horn firm

By Paul Weideman

A NEW BUILDING FOR THE NEW MEXICO BUREAU OF VITAL RECORDS AND HEALTH STATISTICS will be completed this summer in the Valdez Industrial Park. It will occupy a triangle of vacant land on Camino Entrada, next to the New Mexico Motor Vehicle Division office and behind the Santa Fe Mini dealership. “The idea is to create a campus between MVD and Vital Records, the two sharing a parking lot and with a central walkway,” said Shannon Passmore of Spears Horn Architects, which designed the building.

The lobby, almost five times larger than the lobby in the old Vital Records building at 1105 S. St. Francis Drive, will be a bright space because of the tall glass entry and because of a continuous clerestory band below a dramatic cantilevered slab roof. “A big part was designing not just a slab but more structural, going from larger inside to a tapered end,” said James Horn, one of the firm’s principals. “It has a hovering look. Inside it’s acoustic wood and outside it’s metal.”

Horn said they worked a lot on solar orientation and daylighting to save on electricity. “We’re trying to design healthy spaces. There’s a break room and a lactation room, long hallways with natural light, and exterior spaces to relax and walk.

“Like we did with the Solace Center in Tierra Contenta, we have color-coded units, because you come into these big offices and it’s all one big white space. The colors help people orient themselves.” The colors also will enliven the building.

Vital Records and Health Statistics holds birth and death certificates and adoption papers. Each year, the bureau responds to requests from about 400 citizens, public agen-



cies, legislators, and universities — and also provides data to the National Center for Health Statistics. The birth and death statistics in the bureau’s annual reports are the official counts and rates for New Mexico.

The \$4.76 million construction project is funded by the Facilities Management Division, New Mexico General Services Department.

Spears Horn Architects is currently working on another FMD-financed project: \$360,000 of improvements to the historic Lamy Building on Old Santa Fe Trail. The firm won awards from both the Santa Fe and New Mexico chapters of the American Institute of Architects for its 2005 “facelift”

project on the Lamy Building and surrounding porches, courts and yards. The 2019 work is addressing deteriorated wood on the windows and the central balustrade on the main facade facing Old Santa Fe Trail, and on the *portales* on the building’s north and east sides. Perhaps most significant is the replacement of most of the 24 window cornices (which have probably been replaced before at least once in the building’s 140 years) with “like kind” elements.

The overall intent is to retain as much original material as possible and to replace rotten material as needed, but not make changes to the historic appearance. The brick sills, and the stone quoins are in pretty good condition, Pass-



PHOTOS BY PAUL WEIDEMAN

more said, but any loose areas are being repointed.

The Lamy Building started life as part of St. Michael's College. The architectural history of the college founded in Santa Fe in 1859 began in a small adobe building next to San Miguel Chapel. Five Christian Brothers, led by Brother Botolph of Germany, labored in those humble quarters until 1878, when a beautiful three-story adobe building, now known as the Lamy Building, was completed.

The two-story *portales* on the east and north elevations are remnants of the original adobe building, which had these features on all four sides. It also used to be three stories. The mansard-roofed third floor, and a central tower, burned down in 1926. A little over two decades later, St. Michael's College moved to the recently closed Bruns General Hospital, built by the U.S. Army in 1942. The name of the growing school was changed to the College of Santa Fe in 1966.

The college closed in May 2009. The City of Santa Fe and Laureate Education resurrected CSF in 2010 as the Santa Fe University of Art and Design, but it only lasted eight years.

The architects have worked closely with the State Historic Preservation Office and with the owner, St. Michael's College, and the State Tourism office. Most of the Lamy Building serves as office space for Tourism, the remainder occupied by the Governor's Committee on Disability.

The restoration contractor, ESA Construction of Albuquerque, is expected to complete the work on the Lamy Building this month.

Spears Horn Architects is also engaged on an 18,000-square-foot addition for the Academy for Technology and the Classics, adding a new gymnasium, locker rooms, offices, music classrooms, and three science classrooms. That is planned to be ready this fall. The firm is working on construction documents for an addition to the Eldorado Fire Station, and has house projects under way in Tesuque, Los Alamos, and Gallup.

